US seeks 'general support' from RP on war vs Iraq

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

IN *Saturday* SPECIAL

- **Leonardo DiCaprio stars in two big movies**
- **'Dekada '70,' 'Mano Po,' 'Lastikman' reviewed**

DICAPRIO

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FREE of the "burden of politics," President Macapagal exudes that refreshing feeling even while she presides over the Cabinet meeting on Friday flanked by men bowed down with the burdens of state. From left, DOH Secretary Manuel Dayrit, DPWH Secretary Simeon Datumanong, Chief Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz Jr., DAR Secretary Hernani Braganza and DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

VAL HANDUMON

GMA, JDV split on unity

President approves proposal but differs on details

By Dona Pazzibugan, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Cynthia D. Balana

WHILE President Macapagal-Arroyo is open to the idea of a "unity government," she does not agree with its details as expounded extensively by Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said yesterday.

The President said the "government of national unity" should be "program-oriented rather than people-centered."

This is contrary to the De Venecia proposal that all opposition parties and communist and Moro rebel groups in the country be represented in the government.

The Speaker said on Thursday that he had asked the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino of Sen. Edgardo Angara, the Nationalist People's Coalition of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, the communist-led National Democratic Front of Jose Ma. Sison, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front of Hashim Salamat to join a "unity government."

These leaders can either join the Cabinet or nominate their representatives, according to De Venecia.

He said the President had approved the formation of a "unity government" in 45 days because "she's interested in healing the country and moving it forward."

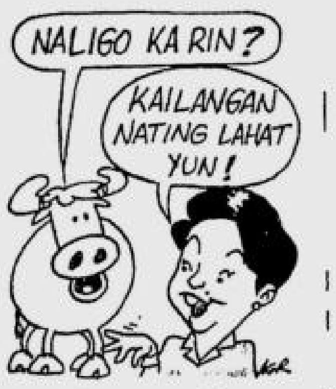
"The concept is acceptable, but not as detailed (by De Venecia)," Bunye told reporters.

He said in a statement that the President had found the proposal for a unity government "well-meaning."

"She's not closed to the idea but the concept needs to further evolve," Bunye said.

At their first meeting this year, Ms Macapa-

GMA/ A13



NALIGO KA RIN?
KAILANGAN NATING LAHAT YUN!

Gloria does an Erap

TAKING a leaf from her disgraced predecessor, President Macapagal-Arroyo has asked to be ministered to by the nuns who gave the arthritic ex-President Estrada a "healing bath" two weeks ago.

Sister Rosita Fernandez,

GLORIA/ A5

IMAGINING THE REPUBLIC

A sense of nation in mind and heart

By Rigoberto Tiglao
Presidential Spokesperson and Chief of Staff

(First of two parts)

ESSAY

CAN we build a strong Philippine Republic, even if it is difficult to imagine a community without a mythical glorious past, without its ancient and classic literature, without God-Emperors and their imperial palaces, all of which serve as powerful symbols to create a deep emotional attachment to one's nation?

But we do have our past: the phenomenal heroism of Rizal, Bonifacio and our other revolutionaries. Scholars like Reynaldo Ileto and Ambeth Ocampo have only started to unearth the histories of Filipinos during the Spanish colonialism.

More importantly, it has been the life-and-death struggles of a group of people that constitute the narratives for imagining a nation—the French and American revolutions, the US Civil War, the anti-colonial insurrections. We have that, and our scholars—hopefully to be popularized by our writers, especially our journalists—are constructing the narratives of the successful Philippine Revolution against Spain, of the many resistance movements against US imperialism and the

A SENSE/ A4

Joma turns down offer; MILF likes idea but...

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
Christine O. Avendaño, *in Manila*
and Allan A. Nawal
PDI Mindanao Bureau

SELF-EXILED communist leader Jose Ma. Sison has turned down an invitation for the communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF) to join a proposed "unity government."

"President Macapagal-Arroyo and Speaker De Venecia might have all the good intentions in the world in putting forward the concept of a government of national unity. But I think that uniting revolutionary and reactionary forces is easier said than done, especially because they do not have any common platform for asserting national independence against foreign domination," Sison said in a statement from The Netherlands.

He nevertheless said that the spirit behind the initiative provided a "glimmer of hope" for the resumption of peace talks between the government and the Left.

Another rebel group invited by De Venecia to join the government did not reject the offer outright.

"We are not closing the possibility that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) would participate in this unity government, which the President is envision-

JOMA/ A13

Not interested, says FVR, as ally seeks SC ruling

By Carlito Pablo and Agnes E. Donato

FIDEL Ramos may be claiming disinterest in a 2004 run, but an avid supporter of his yesterday asked the court to clarify whether a former President could seek reelection.

Insisting that he was doing it for no one in particular, Amado Almazan, a lawyer and former governor of Kalinga Apayao, filed a petition for declaratory relief before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court. But he pledged all-out support for Ramos, anyway.

Talk is rife that Ramos might be drafted as the ruling Lakas' standard-bearer in 2004, and his eligibility to seek reelection is the current subject of debates in political and legal circles. He is also now a hot subject in the media.

"I won't run because I might win," the former President said teasingly in ABS-CBN's "Isyu" Thursday night. "I run every day and I'll keep this up until 2004. But I run only on my doctor's orders."

Turning serious, Ramos said he would not run for the presidency in 2004—but not because of the supposed provision in the 1987 Constitution barring Presidents from seeking reelection.

"I don't want to be back in the pressure cooker for six years," said Ramos, who served as President in 1992-98.

Nevertheless, Almazan wants the court to give the "true and correct meaning or interpretation of Article VII, Section 4, Second and Third Sentences" of the Constitution.

That provision reads: "The President shall not be eligible for any reelection. No person who has succeeded as President and has served as such for more than four years shall be qualified for election to the same office at any time."

NOT/ A4

Ex-gov's son convicted of rape still free

HAS anyone seen this man? He's Bryan Dy last seen in Tarlac.

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

ANGELES CITY—If a new year is supposed to bring hope, then it should also be a time of truth, said the 72-year-old mother of a young man who, along with a son of the former governor of Isabela, Benjamin Dy, was convicted for the rape of two American students in Baguio City in 1994.

According to Felicidad Bernardino, the truth that she knows and that she implores the Supreme Court to find out is that her son Giovan has languished in jail for the past eight years while Dy's son, Bryan Ferdinand, has "not spent even one day in jail."

Bernardino lamented the "injustice" done to her son who was denied bail and has already served at least two-thirds of the minimum penalty of 12 years at the National Bili-

EX-GOV'S SON / A5

TONETTE T. OREJAS/CENTRAL LUZON DESK

JUSTICE PLEASE. That's the only wish Felicidad (left) wants for her only son Giovan who has been serving time in jail while the principal accused, the son of a former governor, is roaming free in almost nine years.

No takers so far for justice portfolio

By Carlito Pablo and Norman Bordadora

THE GUESSING game is on for the new holder of the justice portfolio.

But this early, Malacañang has doused speculation that Presidential Legal Counsel Avelino Cruz is in the running. "Secretary Cruz himself has said that he is not interested in the position," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said yesterday in response to a question from radio dzRH over Cruz's chances of replacing Hernando Perez.

Cruz was a partner of the Villaraza and Angangco Law Office, through which such legal luminaries as Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio and Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo have passed. Even the firm's Raoul Angangco has been reported as among those being considered as justice chief.

To persistent talk that President Macapagal-Arroyo offered the justice portfolio to Vice President Teofisto Guingona during a meeting last December, Bunye said at a briefing: "We do respect the Vice President, and he has been a former justice secretary. He's very much qualified for the

NO TAKERS/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon, Eastern Visayas and Eastern Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/04/02

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

US asks RP for 'general support' in war vs Iraq

By Norman Bordadora

THE UNITED STATES has asked the Philippine government to give it "general support" in the event it attacks Iraq in its war against terrorism.

A highly placed source at the Department of Foreign Affairs said US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone made the request in reply to DFA Secretary Blas Ople's earlier query as to what the US expected from the Philippines in the event of a war in the Middle East.

OPLE

RICCIARDONE

The source, who requested anonymity, said Ricciardone did not specify what form of assistance the US would ask of Manila, but he added that the DFA had already ruled out the sending of combat troops from the Philippines.

Ricciardone was asked about the US request when he met with Ople at the DFA just before the recent holidays.

The source said the government wanted a clear-cut request from Washington since the all-out support the Macapagal administration had promised America earlier was for the war against international terrorism and not the war against Iraq.

The US is set to move against Iraq believing the Middle East nation is hiding weapons of mass destruction which it could use to threaten the world.

The official said a medical team from the Philippines and the use of some local bases as transit points for American forces are the most likely forms of assistance the Philippines could provide the US.

Ople had said that war with Iraq was imminent as there have been no indications the US was backing down from its resolve to attack the country. The assessment was made by Philippine diplomats in the US, the United Nations and the Middle East, Ople said.

Ople had earlier said the Philippine government was committed to extending political, security and humanitarian support to the US government in its war against Iraq.

He said the government will allow US warships and planes to land, deck and refuel in Philippine territory. American troops will also be allowed transit through the Philippines, but he stressed that this should be "swift."

"Our Mutual Defense Treaty with the US binds us to help (them)," Ople said.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo had made the commitment in September and the expression of support was made in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1441, which calls on all UN member-states to combat terrorism.

"We will try to make our modest contribution because we're not a mighty country. We have had success in our own efforts to contain terrorism in our country," Ople said.

The secretary reiterated that Philippine support would not take the form of sending Filipino troops to Iraq, but in the form of a humanitarian mission.

"I can't see the Philippines sending combat troops to join a foreign war, but it is in the realm of possibility to send a humanitarian force, medical teams and engineers to support our allies in the Middle East," he said.

The US is expected to push harder for military action against Iraq after President George W. Bush condemned Iraqi's disclosure report on the weapons it has as being "full of omissions and deceptions."

Salamat as gov't exec? Not on your life, says Rosales

By Jhunnex Napallacan and Carla P. Gomez,
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Can one imagine Moro secessionist leader Hashim Salamat touting the country's tourist attractions as the next tourism secretary or communist supremo Jose Ma. Sison handling the Philippines' external relations as foreign affairs secretary?

Akbayan Rep. Loretta Anne "Etta" Rosales said she could not as she described as simply laughable the idea of forming a "unity government" in the wake of President Macapagal-Arroyo's surprise announcement that she would not run for president in 2004.

Speaker Jose de Venecia claimed the other day that the President had approved the creation in 45 days of an all-inclusive unity government that would embrace communist, Moro and other rebels and even the most recalcitrant oppositionists.

Rosales said appointing the members of the various opposition groups as well as Moro and communist rebels to government positions would not address the problems plaguing the country.

Making such announcements might give a semblance of unity but that would not solve anything as the problems concerned issues and not personalities, Rosales said in an interview with dyLA radio.

"Don't give them Cabinet positions. Address the fundamental issues that have kept the Filipino people impoverished," she said.

Rosales said she found the proposal not so much funny as sad if that is how De Venecia and other government officials are proposing to solve the problems of the country.

If government officials wanted peace and reconciliation, she said the elite should reconcile with the marginalized and impoverished sectors of society.

She said the marginalized sector of society should be given what is due them and what has been stolen from them.

But Rosales said she did not see this happening because of some of the personalities that De Venecia mentioned.

She cited business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco who, she said, would not be able to carry out an agrarian reform program because his business interests would be affected.

Rosales also pointed out that major political parties were not anchored on programs, platforms or issues but on personalities. *With Lino L. Parone Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

Emission tests to begin under Clean Air Act

By Abigail L. Ho

PUBLIC utility vehicles emitting thick black smoke will not have their registration renewed beginning Monday unless they comply with new emission standards set by the Clean Air Act which took effect on Jan. 1.

But PUVs failing their emission tests would still be allowed to operate for another 90 days without having their franchises suspended for at least one year.

After a dialog with transport leaders on Thursday, the Land Transportation Office agreed to give the PUVs a 90-day grace period on compliance instead of further delaying the implementation of new emission standards under the Clean Air Act.

Also, instead of the P300 that private emission testing centers are charging for emission tests, the LTO will charge PUVs only P90.

"The cost of the emission test far outweighs the benefits that will be derived from the strict implementation of the program in terms of better health and less respiratory illnesses," LTO Chief Roberto Latimoso said in a news briefing yesterday.

Violators will be fined P1,000 on the first offense, P3,000 on the second offense and P5,000 and a suspension of the franchise for up to one year on the third offense.

As a bonus, the environment department is working out a financing scheme with the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) for public transport operators would need to replace their old engines with environment-compliant ones.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun said in a telephone interview that an initial meeting was held with the DBP yesterday and another meeting has been scheduled for Monday.

She said the Land Bank of the Philippines was open to a similar arrangement.

"The amount that they (transport groups) can borrow will depend on the extent of the repairs that would have to be done on their vehicles. For jeepneys, a top overhaul will cost P35,000 while a major overhaul will cost P50,000. Minor repairs can range from hundreds of pesos to several thousands. It really depends on the need," she said. *With a report from Cynthia D. Balana*

PROTECT OUR FUND! FIGHT PLUNDER!
PROTECT OUR FUND! FIGHT PLUN

THE MILITANT group Courage, a government workers' union, protests the increase in mandatory contributions to the Government Service Insurance System in front of the pension fund's office in Pasay City yesterday.

JESS YUSON

Shell, Petron raise pump prices

PILIPINAS Shell and Petron Corp. yesterday raised their prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 49 centavos per liter and of liquefied petroleum gas by P1 per kilogram.

Pilipinas Shell's new pump prices were effective 10 p.m. last night while Petron's will take effect at noon today.

New players Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V, Seaoil Petroleum Corp., TotalFinaElf Phil. and Unioil Petroleum Phil. Inc. said they would match the Big Three's price increases.

Caltex Philippines was the first company to implement the new prices last week.

Roberto Kanapi, Pilipinas Shell general manager for external affairs, said the price hikes resulted from the sharp increase in world crude prices.

Data of the Department of Energy showed that average Dubai crude prices jumped to $25.73 per barrel in December from $23.31 in November.

Declining production due to a nationwide workers' strike in oil-producing Venezuela and heightened fears of war in Iraq have driven crude prices up.

On the other hand, the peso lost 16 centavos from P53.48 to the dollar in December to P53.32 in November.

Kanapi added that the price increases did not include costs of producing gasoline under new specifications of the Clean Air Act.

"We could consider another price adjustment by the end of the month for that, but we prefer that this would be in smaller increments," he said.

The oil executive added that international contract prices of LPG went up by $10 from $327 per metric ton in November to $337 last month. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

On this day, January 4
we celebrate the birth of
Alice Perez Lejano,
the most wonderful
mother, grandmother, and wife,
professor and social worker,
and tireless servant of God.
Happy Birthday
to one whose life is poetry.

Workers rap new GSIS deductions

AROUND 50 government employees picketed the Government Service Insurance System in Pasay City yesterday to denounce the new increase in workers' contributions to the state-run pension fund.

On Jan. 1, the GSIS started collecting the new rate of nine percent from the monthly salaries of all government employees.

Ferdinand Gaite, president of the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (Courage), said the employees are protesting the approval of the new rate which was done by a mere GSIS board resolution, and not through a congressional repeal of the GSIS Law of 1997.

"This is very burdensome for government workers. We should not suffer for the bad decisions the GSIS has been making," he said.

He referred in particular to the GSIS' recent purchase for $46 million of a Juan Luna painting and the multimillion-peso loan extended for an anomalous Public Estates Authority road project.

Gaite noted that the new rate of GSIS contributions came after the base amount of a worker's salary from which the contribution was to be collected was steadily increased.

In 1997, he said nine percent was collected from the first P10,000 of a worker's salary. He said two percent was deducted from the amount in excess of P10,000.

The base amount steadily increased in succeeding years until it reached P16,000 in 2002, he added.

"It's true that the new rate would mostly affect workers earning P16,000 and above," he said. "But the GSIS board failed to realize that millions of workers had long been suffering with the regular increase in the base amount since 1997." *Christian Esguerra*

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MJ bail money not his own

MANILA Rep. Mark Jimenez's local lawyer yesterday denied that the United States court that granted him bail was asking the controversial legislator to explain how he had earned the funds that he would be using for his $500,000 bail bond.

Lawyer Ed Escueta said in a statement that a simple verification by acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez would have shown that the Miami court "explicitly ordered that not a single cent of Jimenez's bail money should come from his own pocket."

In a separate letter to the INQUIRER yesterday, Escueta protested his client being "erroneously" identified as a "convict" in a front page caption in the Jan. 3 issue.

"He is not a convict as judgment has yet to be rendered on the charges he is facing," Escueta said. **(Our apologies.—Ed)**

"Even if the court in Miami had allowed Jimenez to use his own money, he would not have any difficulty doing so because it's an established fact in the US that my client's various companies have been doing well," Escueta said, hinting that Jimenez had enough "clean" money to raise the bond.

Gutierrez has been quoted as saying that Jimenez may be having a hard time covering the half-a-million-dollar bond because he had no "clean money" and had to resort to asking relatives and friends to raise the amount. *Norman Bordadora*

Crime rose 20% in 2002—PNP

By TJ Burgonio and Leila B. Salaverria

THE CRIME rate increased by almost 20 percent in 2002 despite the police's successful pursuit of kidnap-for-ransom groups mainly because police were not as successful in curbing other crimes like car thefts and bank robberies, officials said yesterday.

The crime volume from January to November last year rose by at least 19.3 percent, said Director Ricardo de Leon, of police community relations, quoting from the Philippine National Police accomplishment report for 2002.

De Leon attributed the higher crime volume to the rise in index crimes, or crimes against persons and property, which posted increases of 35.8 percent and 9.4 percent, respectively. Index crimes include crimes like murder, homicide, physical injuries, theft, robbery and rape. Non-index crime refers to such crimes as illegal gambling.

De Leon noted, however, that the crime solution rate remained high at 89.1 percent.

Significant gains

He said the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) group, created in July, made significant gains in its campaign against kidnap-for-ransom syndicates, managing to neutralize six identified KFR groups in the PNP target list.

Pacer managed to bring down the number of kidnappings around the country by 33.3 percent, from 99 in 2001 to 66 in 2002, and by 32 percent in Metro Manila, De Leon said.

Car theft incidents went up, however, with cases from January to November totaling 2,214, up from 1,969 in the same period in 2001. Even so, five car theft syndicates, including the Ilonggo, Mayor, Mechure, Henson and Veloso gangs, were busted.

Police noted the same trend in bank robberies, which totaled 37 during the 11-month period, against 27 in the same period the previous year.

The increase in last year's crime rate was attributed to some innovations which made it easier for people to report crimes, and which in turn prompted police officers to be more responsive.

"The crime volume may have increased a bit due to the fact that we have been creative in encouraging people to report crimes," said Interior Secretary Joey Lina.

These programs include the Department of Interior and Local Government's Patrol 117, a hotline where all crime and accident calls can be patched through, as well as the PNP's Text 2920 and the National Capital Region's Magic Eye Txt Patrol, which receive complaints and reports about crime and emergencies from cellular phone users. The Magic Eye program also uses TV cameras to catch civilian lawbreakers in the act.

New cops

Lina said the PNP will be hiring an additional 4,000 new cops this year, on top of the 2,000 already being trained. More police equipment, including additional motorcycles and P188 million worth of firearms, will be acquired this year.

PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane said the police would continue to launch new innovations, such as setting up highly mobile police stations in crime-prone areas beginning this month.

The mobile stations will be self-contained units, manned by a team of investigators and SWAT personnel, and provided with cars, motorcycles and communication equipment so they could easily respond to crises and terror attacks.

The stations would be mounted on large trucks or vans, but would function like any regular station in any police district.

"It's the kind that we can deploy on short notice to the areas of concern, and it should also be capable of managing incidents," Ebdane told reporters during the traditional New Year's call by regional directors in Camp Crame.

Much like any regular station, it will be headed by a district director and manned by investigators who will blotter complaints and conduct probes of heinous and petty crimes, Ebdane said.

After Scouts 'fiasco,' cops ready for families' meet

By TJ Burgonio and Blanche S. Rivera

POLICE officials yesterday assured foreign delegates to the Fourth World Meeting of Families they would be safe during the four-day event slated on Jan. 22 to 26 in Manila, saying they have put in place an elaborate security plan for this.

At the same time, Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane took exception to Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon's published statement yesterday blaming the PNP for the decision of 800 British Boy Scouts to cancel their scheduled visit to Manila next week.

Ebdane said Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, deputy chief for operation, and Director Avelino Razon, director for human resources and doctrine development, have mapped out security measures for the World Meeting of Families.

Ebdane said "they have made preparations as early as last year," referring to the two officials whom he had tapped to coordinate with officials of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

75 countries

Thousands of delegates from 75 countries are expected to take part in the World Meeting of Families.

Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, director of the National Capital Region Police Office, said his deputy, Chief Supt. Nicholas Pasinos, has been put in charge of the task force to oversee security preparations.

Yesterday, Pasinos met with Church officials to finalize preparations at Villa San Miguel, Jaime Cardinal Sin's official residence in Mandaluyong City, Velasco said.

"We will assure the delegates that they will provided appropriate security," Velasco said.

A spokesperson for the British Boy Scouts had cited security reasons for the cancellation of the youngsters' visit.

Gordon had said the police "unwittingly drove the Scouts away" with their premature announcement of the visit.

Ebdane said the PNP should not be blamed for announcing the British scouts' side trip to Manila from Bangkok, saying this was common knowledge.

"Even if we did not announce it, it was an open secret. It is international public knowledge that they have such a program, so why blame us?" he asked reporters in an ambush interview.

Measures

The PNP, Ebdane pointed out, drew up measures to ensure the safety of the boy scouts during their two-day visit here.

The scouts were supposed to visit Manila to interact with their local counterparts. They were scheduled to arrive in Manila on Jan. 7 after taking part in the 20th World Jamboree in Sattahip, Thailand.

Meanwhile, in anticipation of the influx of delegates to the world meet as well as other tourists coming for Visit Philippines 2003, the Bureau of Immigration will open special lanes at the country's international airports to facilitate the entry of the visitors.

Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo said that some 5,000 tourists are expected to visit the country under the Department of Tourism's Visit Philippines 2003 program.

Domingo said she is also considering issuing landed visas to citizens of "friendly countries" taking part in the DOT program.

Go back to work, strikers ordered

STRIKING Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. workers have been ordered to return to work following the collapse of conciliation talks with PLDT management initiated by the Department of Labor and Employment.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas signed a certification for compulsory arbitration Thursday night mandating the National Labor Relations Commission to enter the case.

In her order, Sto. Tomas said the NLRC would have to take over after the "failure of the parties to arrive at a voluntary settlement of the dispute through the process of conciliation."

Under the law, striking workers have to return to work upon receipt of the DOLE order.

The order may be served on Monday or Tuesday, following final arrangements with the National Conciliation and Mediation Board, according to Labor Undersecretary Josephus Jimenez.

Jimenez said the notice would not be served during the weekend to ensure that the courts and law enforcement agencies would be available if a conflict ensued.

The 7,000-strong Manggagawa sa Komunikasyon ng Pilipinas, PLDT's rank-and-file union, was holding a meeting when sought for comment.

But MKP treasurer Gemma Doble, one of the 546 PLDT employees who were retrenched and which case became the basis for the strike, said that while the DOLE order put the workers "at a disadvantage," the union had a bigger chance of winning the battle before the NLRC. *Blanche Rivera*

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Not interested, says FVR, as ally seeks SC ruling

From page A1

Almazan described the provision as "ambiguous" and "open to several different interpretations, resulting in controversies and disturbing power plays/maneuvering within and among political parties [that] may, in turn, weaken and erode the stability of our political system."

He said "a final declaration" by the court "at this stage of our political life" on the meaning of the provision would "bring about a more mature and a stronger commitment to the sense of accountability, utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, efficiency, patriotism and justice, by our elective officials who are mandated to hold public office as a sacred public trust."

Almazan asked the court to clarify whether a person who had served as President and who did not run for the same position immediately after the end of his/her term would be qualified to run again after one or two six-year terms.

He also asked the court to say whether the phrase "a person who has succeeded as President and has served as such for more than four years ..." applied to a Vice President who had succeeded to the presidency.

'That's all'

"I just want a clarification, that's all," Almazan told reporters at the weekly "Balitaan" in Hotel Rembrandt in Quezon City.

He said he had been thinking of filing the petition even before President Macapagal-Arroyo announced that she was not running in 2004 and Ramos' name came up as a possible candidate.

"I've been planning to file this petition since two months ago, but I was not able to complete it [before] the Christmas break," he said.

Almazan described Ramos as "still the most respected, most influential Lakas leader," but insisted that he did not file the petition for the latter.

"I am doing this as a member of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and as a Filipino citizen," he said. "I am not doing this for any particular person. But if somehow, some people benefit from the court ruling on my petition, so be it."

Only a few months ago, Ramos said the ban on seeking reelection constituted a "gray area" that had yet to be tested before the proper court of law.

At the TV show Thursday night, he said he was satisfied with his current role as statesman representing the Philippines in various forums and gatherings abroad.

"I'm like an elder brother to our 80 million Filipinos," he said. "Just don't call me grandfather."

Playing the role of elder brother, Ramos said the citizenry should abandon the culture of politicking, which he described as the nation's "biggest cottage industry," and adopt a culture of "caring, sharing and, more important, daring."

"That's daring to change," he added.

Asked whether constitutional changes could be made before the 2004 elections, Ramos said: "I doubt it." But he said there was still a "window" for that through the convening of Congress as a constituent assembly.

He also noted that a number of congressmen were in fact pushing for a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution.

'At any time'

In the view of Vice President Teofisto Guingona, the 1987 Constitution does not allow the reelection of a President.

"There are many ways of going around the law . . . [but] the Constitution is against the reelection of a President at any time," he said in a chance interview following a news conference at his office.

Guingona, however, deferred to the Supreme Court to render the final interpretation on the matter.

"The Supreme Court has to take action," he said. But he expressed doubt that the tribunal would act on the question at this time, noting that there was as yet no "actual controversy" on Ramos' proposed candidacy.

But Guingona hinted of the wisdom in having Ramos for President again. Asked if Ramos would be a good President if he runs and wins in 2004, Guingona said: "Well, I was his executive secretary so I'm a little biased [for him]."

With Ramos' name being bandied about as possible Lakas standard-bearer, the opposition has countered that it would likewise field its own ex-President, Joseph Estrada.

Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla said Estrada enjoyed a wide base of support and could roundly beat Ramos in 2004.

Asked to comment, Guingona said: "Anything is possible, but a meeting between the former Presidents in the 2004 elections is improbable." *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

No takers yet for justice portfolio

From page A1

position."

But Bunye could not confirm whether the President had actually made such an offer.

On the other hand, Guingona expressed apprehension about taking up the post that Perez vacated in a resignation letter he submitted to the President Thursday, and which she immediately accepted.

"I don't want lightning to strike thrice," Guingona said, referring to Malacañang's miscues last year—its premature announcement of his resignation from the Department of Foreign Affairs and its mistaken declaration that he was returning to the Cabinet as "Mindanao czar."

"Frankly speaking, my position is still not to join the Cabinet," Guingona said. "But now I have to keep an open mind because [Ms Macapagal] has shown the spirit of sacrifice" with her announcement that she would not seek the presidency in the 2004 elections.

An official of the ruling Lakas earlier said that aside from Guingona, the party was also betting on Silvestre Bello, also a former justice secretary and now the chief government negotiator with the communist-led National Democratic Front.

Previous reports cited the following other probable appointees: House Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales Jr., Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo and former Congressman Sergio Apostol.

Bunye said the Palace search committee would come up with names for the President to "consider."

To questions that he himself might be considered for the Department of Justice, all Bunye, a lawyer, would say was: "No comment."

According to Guingona, one of the jobs of a justice secretary is to provide legal opinion on the President's government policies.

"I have things that I have to consider, and these include the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement and our role in the US-Iraq conflict," he said, adding:

"I know that the MLSA has been approved and I don't know what the responsibilities of the secretary of justice may have in so far as [certain] issues are concerned."

Under the MLSA, the justice secretary is part of the oversight committee together with the foreign affairs and defense secretaries.

Guingona quit as foreign affairs secretary last June because of major policy differences with the President. These differences included his opposition to the MLSA, which Malacañang was then pushing.

The Vice President said that while the Macapagal administration had promised to assist the United States in its planned war against Iraq, the Philippines had nothing with which to support the superpower.

"If there is still no United Nations resolution [backing US action against Iraq] and the US asks us to [provide] logistical support or humanitarian missions, what will be my legal opinion as justice secretary?" he said.

Earlier, Guingona noted that the administration had prematurely announced support for US forces in terms of transit rights and overflight privileges.

He said that without a UN resolution on the matter, there was nothing that would cover the Philippines' participation in the US-Iraq conflict.

"While there is a presidential legal adviser, the justice secretary's opinion is official," Guingona pointed out yesterday. "When there is disagreement between the legal adviser and the justice secretary, it is up to the President to decide."

Opposition Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta said that while Perez's resignation as justice secretary was long overdue, it was a welcome move that would signal a new beginning for the administration if complemented by a Cabinet revamp.

Oreta said she hoped the President would choose a career executive instead of another political appointee to replace Perez.

She also batted for the appointment of new and competent executives to the Cabinet, who would "infuse novel ideas and revitalize [the President's] administration with fresh energy and political will to carry out the reform program she wants in place by the time she steps aside in 2004."

With a report from Cynthia D. Balana

Perez to pursue cases vs MJ, Villarama

By Norman Bordadora

HERNANDO Perez yesterday said he would file legal actions against the two lawmakers who implicated him in the "million-dollar" scandal.

In his farewell news conference at the Department of Justice, Perez said he would file a P10-million libel case against Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama, who first spoke about the scandal in a privileged speech, and a perjury charge, among others, against the extradited Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez, who accused him of extorting $2 million.

"Time and again, I have said that the only act that prevented me from filing criminal charges against Mark Jimenez is [my refusal for his] extradition to be marred by a criminal case pending against him," said the resigned justice secretary.

According to Perez, a pending criminal charge in local courts would have caused the delay of Jimenez's extradition.

"Now that he is already in the US, my lawyers will file the necessary charges," Perez said.

Jimenez himself has filed plunder and other charges against Perez before the Office of the Ombudsman.

At the press conference, Perez disclaimed any political plan for 2004.

"Like the President, I have no plans," he said. "I am not going to run as President, not even as senator."

As for his possible replacement at the DOJ, he said he merely insisted that the appointee be a lawyer.

Perez said President Macapagal-Arroyo had sought his comment on the one candidate that she had for justice secretary.

"I have no comment on the identity of the person," he told reporters. "She would still have to talk to the person."

Jimenez allies hail Perez exit

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THREE of Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez's friends in the House yesterday hailed the resignation of Hernando Perez as justice secretary, saying he had relieved President Macapagal-Arroyo of a burden.

And like true-blue defenders, Representatives Jacinto Paras, Prospero Pichay and Willie Villarama assailed Justice Undersecretary Merceditas Gutierrez for saying Thursday that Jimenez was having difficulty putting up his $500,000 bail bond in Florida because the US government wanted assurance that it would be "clean money."

They accused Gutierrez of bias against their extradited colleague and said she should "shut up."

Paras said Perez should also quit as secretary general of the Lakas-CMD (Christian Muslim Democrats), the new name of the ruling party.

"That is one issue that has to be resolved when the party leaders meet [on Jan. 8]," Paras said. "Because even if the charges against [Perez] have not been proven, he has been tainted and the party will also have the same burden if he stays in that very powerful position."

Villarama said the President's acceptance of Perez's resignation was "a welcome development and a manifestation of [her] desire to begin a new chapter in Philippine politics."

He said Perez's replacement should "allow justice to take its course and keep a professional distance from ongoing cases filed against him before the Ombudsman."

Paras said Perez's resignation was a noble act, but pointed out that the resigned official merely preempted the anticipated decision of the President not to take him back.

Still, Paras said, Perez should be praised for "unburdening" the President of controversy after her announcement that she would not run in 2004 and would concentrate on good governance.

A sense of nation in mind and heart

From page A1

anti-Japanese resistance.

But we have more recently than those. We have an actual experience of a struggle by the community that is as real as any people can ever achieve: People Power I and II when Filipinos of all classes rose as one.

And we have to keep in mind that the emergence of nation-states on the world stage is but a second's duration compared to mankind's history. And peoples have proven their ability to build a strong nation-state within just a generation.

Note the following descriptions by scholars:

- "Patronage-oriented political parties and free-spending corruption dominated..." "The political system consisted of a "distinctive complex of a weak national administration, divided and fragmentary public authority, and nonprogrammatic political parties."
- The nation-state "had a weak hold on the imagination and consciousness of a people who were now forced to think of them" as one community. Most identified themselves with their province of birth not with the nation.

Apt descriptions of the Philippines today these may be, these referred to different countries. The first described the United States in the 1930s. The second described Italy in the 1920s. These two countries were able to build strong-nation states within a generation. We can too.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her State-of-the-Nation address announced the overarching goal she had set for her administration: To build a strong Philippine Republic.

Political analysts and scholars have interpreted it as a project to build a strong Philippine state. Indeed, the two-pronged strategy she outlined to strengthen the Filipino Republic—making it independent from narrow class and sectoral interests and building up its institutions' capacities—referred to that entity we call the state.

Not only the state

But the President wasn't referring to the task of strengthening the state only. She was quite precise: It is the Philippine Republic that must be strengthened.

So what is the Philippine Republic? It is not just the institution that is the state, with its government apparatus. Nor is it just the nation, the community of people with generally common descent, history, language, and culture living in a clearly defined territory. The Philippine Republic is both: an indivisible entity called the "nation-state."

The constitution itself merges the two concepts of nation and state in its section 1 Article II: "The Philippines [i.e., the nation] is a democratic, republican state."

The Philippine Republic consists of the state as an institution and us Filipinos, as a community. The nation-state may in this capitalist era may be seen as the super-corporation, with shareholders as its citizens, and with its board of directors, and the different "corporate" departments corresponding to the state and its government.

The big difference obviously is that the nation-state is the only corporation that defines the public rules not only for its members but also for other corporations in its defined territory, and using force if necessary to have its way.

Another big difference which is really a theme of this essay: this particular corporation—and similar ones elsewhere in the world—has determined and will determine the fates of millions of human beings.

President Macapagal's agenda is a formidable task. The two elements of the nation-state interact to create either a vicious or virtuous cycle. A weak nation creates a weak state, and a weak state continues to make for weak nation.

Imagined community

One relatively recent but now classic definition of the nation, by the scholar Benedict Anderson, is that it is an "imagined community." We will never meet each and every Filipino. There will never be a stockholders' meeting in some hotel ballroom for that corporation we call the Philippine Republic. But still, we "know," we imagine, and identify with a national community we call the Philippines. It is the intensity of that image of a national community in the people's minds—even felt in their hearts—that determines their nation's strength.

But history has handicapped us in imagining a community. Very little in our three and half centuries of Spanish rule and four decades of US colonialism served as precursors to the building of a Philippine nation-state. The two colonial conquerors in fact had blocked Filipinos' conceptualizing of the nation as a community that bonds us one way or another, whether we like it or not, to a common destiny.

Before Spanish colonization, the archipelago was populated by scattered, independent barangays. There was no imagined community. There were only small, directly perceived communities of groups of families.

There was after all no compulsion to organize people on a scale bigger than the extended clan. Circa 1600, Luzon and the Visayas had a population of only 800,000. Compare that to Japan's 22 million, India's 135 million, China's 150 million, Java's 4 million, Burma's 3 million—dense populations that prompted the organization of kingdom-states with the God-King/Emperor as the organizing principle, as early as, in Japan's case, the 8th century.

Stunted by colonizers

Despite the growth of the population to 4 million by 1850, a sense of national community however was stunted by Spanish colonialism. The main factor for this was that, in contrast to that in Latin America, Spanish colonial rule was dominantly through the Catholic parish friars.

The community, which the friars forced the indios to "imagine", was not a national entity -- well, not even an earthly one. It was a religious community, the parish as a flock of God through the Holy Roman Catholic Church. After the family, Filipinos' sense of belonging was in the "flock," with the Spanish friar as shepherd. As the historian Reynaldo Ileto put it, the community our ancestors believed they were living in was foremost the religious realm: "The Spanish priest was the equivalent of the God-King elsewhere in Southeast Asia."

Religious flocks in Eden

That notion of being members almost solely of religious flocks, rather than of a national community was inculcated over three centuries. The impact of those three centuries cannot be underestimated.

Even popular myths such as that of Bernardo Carpio and our epic Florante at Laura talks of Christian kingdoms. As the historian Ileto uncovered, even in revolt towards the end of the 19th century, the felt project on the grass-roots level was not for building a nation, but for creating an Eden-like religious community.

Capitalist satan

It is even not unlikely that the growth and survival of the Communist Party - the major force today opposing the building of a Philippine Republic—have been due to the fact that it has tapped into remnants of such a religious realm.

Philippine Communist Party ideology and practice make up a secular, nation-less religion: the prophesized Proletariat versus the Capitalist Satan; that the Proletariat as the Chosen People will eventually triumph to create a classless Eden; the scriptures of Marx, Lenin, and Mao with "Amado Guerrero", now "Armando Liwanag" as their sole interpreter; even the secret oath-taking ritual for new party members

Spanish colonial policy of indirect rule, of recruiting local elites for administering the archipelago —with the Spanish and Chinese mestizo as its core—also served to stunt the development of a national identity.

Mestizo elite's agenda

In most of the world's strong nation-states, it was the elite—they had the resources after all—that was the vanguard for conceiving a nation. Here though, the mestizo elite's agenda was for full-fledged membership in the Spanish Crown. The main project even of the **ilustrados** was not for creating a sovereign nation-state, but for reforming colonial government and the recognition of the mestizos, and later even Indios, as Spanish subjects.

But who could blame them? The concept of a nation-state started to crystallize only in the 18th century. It is only in the 20th century that the nation-state has been firmly established as the prime social organization of mankind, the corporation which would determine how billions of people would live. It would have taken during that time a heroic, spectacular effort to conceive, to imagine a Philippine nation-state.

Remarkable heroism

Indeed, even with a Philippine Republic existing in the mid-20th century, hundreds of thousands of our middle and upper class have chosen to leave the nation, to imagine themselves as members of communities overseas.

It is in this context that the heroism of a mestizo like Rizal and other revolutionaries like Bonifacio, Aguinaldo, and Mabini was quite remarkable.

When the notion of nation-states in the world was still emerging, these revolutionaries not only had a clear concept of what the Filipino Republic was; they saw it as something worth dying for.

Little Brown Brother

US colonialism further handicapped our ability to conceive of a national community. "Benign assimilation" wasn't just a slogan. The US conquerors—especially Governor General William Taft who nurtured the Federalist Party —attempted to mold a Filipino community that would be part · formally or informally—of a rising USA., its little brown brother.

That project required the deletion of the historical memory of three and a half centuries of a people, and the decades of resistance to US colonialism. Even the language used by the revolutionists as members of the Filipino elite, Spanish, was practically eradicated in several years' time. The novel that first imagined the Philippine nation—the Noli Me Tangere—as well as the writings of Filipino revolutionists likes Apolinario Mabini and Antonio Luna became accessible only through a biased English translation. *(To be concluded tomorrow)*

Ex-gov's son convicted of rape still free

From page A1

bid Prisons in Muntinlupa.

On March 16, 1994, Giovan, who was then 20, was convicted along with Bryan, his brother-in-law, by Judge Salvador Valdez of the Baguio Regional Trial Court of rape and acts of lasciviousness committed on two vacationing American students.

On Jan. 29, the Supreme Court's First Division not only affirmed Valdez's ruling but also upgraded Bernardino's sentence to life imprisonment.

Bryan, who was only 17 and a minor when he was convicted, was allowed to post bail during the trial but was not committed to jail when he reached 18.

The tribunal did not modify his penalty, which had originally been the same as Giovan's.

'Consensual sex'

In March 2002, the two filed separate motions for reconsideration. They want the cases against them reviewed and are seeking an acquittal, arguing that what had transpired was consensual sex.

The young Dy, in his motion, said that the charges were trumped up. He claimed the "police investigators exhibited reprehensible conduct in manufacturing incriminating evidence."

While Giovan has left it to the court to decide the case, he has called attention to Bryan's being out of jail. His lawyers said the court was made to believe that Dy's son had been in prison all this time.

"This apparently is also the understanding of the court since copies for accused-appellant Dy of notices and official correspondence, including a copy of the decision, were addressed to the Bureau of Corrections," Giovan's motion read.

On Sept. 13, 1994, the bureau certified to the court that it had "no record of (the) confinement" of Bryan "in this prison as of this date."

Receiving his copy of Bryan's motion on March 12 last year, Bureau of Corrections Director Ricardo Macala had this handwritten note jotted down on the same document, which the INQUIRER obtained: "No such name of Bryan Ferdinand Dy in the index file of prison at the (National Bilibid Prisons) maximum overseer office."

Hid in US; return in '98

Giovan said in an interview that Bryan has been hiding in the United States during much of the case and up to this date.

He claimed that his brother-in-law came home "through the backdoor" only in 1998 to appear before the Supreme Court.

"He was presented only because I requested the court to produce his living body," Giovan said.

The Dys, he added, had the "courage to bring Bryan back then because they were close to Erap (jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada)."

Bryan was said to have left the country again when Estrada was deposed in the Edsa II people power uprising in January 2001.

An INQUIRER source said the young Dy initially slipped out of the country through the northern exit points using a different name. He stayed in the United States until 1998, the source said.

The source added that Bryan was seen in Tarlac last month.

Bryan's motion did not admit or argue that he had eluded a jail term.

"How he had managed to roam like a free man for almost a decade in spite of our conviction still puzzles me but perhaps that's what (political) power can do," Giovan said.

According to him, the prison directors had changed thrice in almost 10 years and Macala, the present director, insists that Bryan was not incarcerated there.

Giovan's lawyers pointed out a basic flaw: "The trial court should have canceled the cash bond posted by Dy during trial and ordered his commitment for service of sentence."

Broken promise

To Giovan, his continued detention indicates a broken promise by the elder Dy.

"I did not run away because he promised that he would take care of everything, that I would be behind prison bars for only three weeks," the young Bernardino said.

The three weeks became three months and then three years.

"Now I have counted eight years here. I've lost my youth and it seems I'll never ever enjoy freedom again," he said.

That is a prospect his mother dreads.

"We haven't had many chances of praying together as a family. I want us to be praying together again, outside the Bilibid," said Giovan's mother.

She and her husband Antonio, a mechanic, has spent more than P8 million, obtained from selling family property and taking out loans, to pursue their son's legal battle.

"My son, although with hesitation, has submitted himself to the wheels of justice," Bernardino said.

Giovan said he suspected the Dys wanted him to remain in prison forever because they fear that he would take revenge on Bryan if he gets out.

"I wouldn't do that because I want to gain my freedom back, take care of my old parents and my two children (the first from Dy's daughter Armie, the second, from a new partner). I wouldn't waste my life by hurting him," he said.

But it does not seem as if the Dys have really forsaken Giovan. Bryan's appeal for acquittal includes his brother-in-law.

Giovan's lawyers are asking the Supreme Court to "take a second look" at the case, scrutinize it with "fresh eyes" and "see the injustice that waits to be put to right by this court's corrective hand."

Business backs shift to parliamentary gov't

BUSINESS is coming out strongly in support of a shift in the form of government from a presidential to a parliamentary system in the belief that it would lead to more accountability and transparency in the conduct of political leaders and could generate substantial government savings.

Business leader Raul T. Concepcion, a former chair of the Federation of Philippine Industries, said most businessmen have become frustrated with the presidential system and said that they would actively push for the adoption of a parliamentary system.

Concepcion said legislators would become more accountable for their actions in a parliamentary system as members of parliament have no fixed terms.

He said there would be more transparency because legislators would act clearly along political party lines.

"Politicians are now more sensitive to criticism than before. The parliamentary form of government would give the public more access to their motives and thoughts in enacting reforms," Concepcion said.

With greater accountability and transparency, Concepcion said businessmen were optimistic that lawmakers would work towards adopting more meaningful reforms particularly in areas affecting the economy.

The president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sergio Ortiz-Luis said the biggest impact of a shift in the form of government would be on the budget deficit which had ballooned to P200 billion as of November 2002.

Ortiz-Luis said that it was impossible for the government to sustain the current system of government which involves large chunks of public money being used to hold national and local elections. *Gil Cabacungan*

Gloria does an Erap

From page A1

of the Religious of the Virgin Mary, was brought to Malacañang at about 7 a.m. yesterday by former Sen. Ernesto Maceda, an Estrada ally.

She attended Mass with the President at the Malacañang chapel.

After the Mass, the nun "prayed over" the President who may be said to need it as she has renounced all ambition for a full term in 2004 in the interest of healing and uniting a deeply divided nation.

Sister Rosita is from the same Mother Ignacia Healing Center in Barangay Bagumbong, Caloocan, with the miraculous fountain where Estrada went for a record four-hour healing ritual on Dec. 19.

Sister Gloria Ross from the center administered the exclusive "spiritual healing" ritual to Estrada, which involved the jailed ex-President being doused repeatedly with the miraculous water to heal his arthritic knees and "wounded spirit."

Maceda, who was with Estrada during the ritual, said his having brought Sister Rosita to Malacañang had nothing to do with politics.

Sister Rosita said a prayer for the President and then sprinkled her with some of the miraculous water from the center.

At 10 a.m., a refreshed Ms Macapagal presided over a Cabinet meeting. *Dona Pazz-ibugan*

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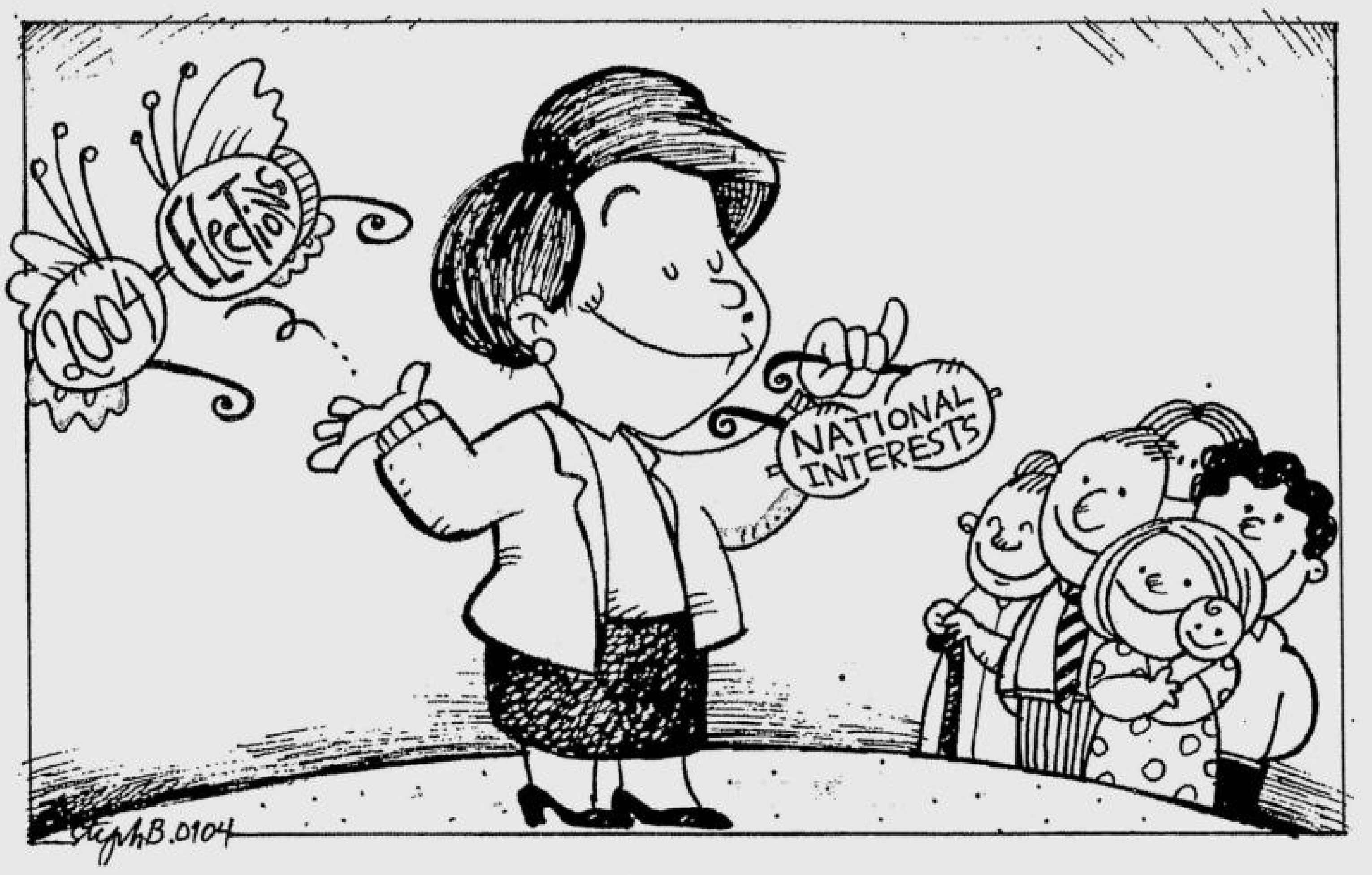


A new agenda

EDITORIAL

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of President Macapagal-Arroyo that she is not seeking reelection in 2004 should serve to trigger a chain of events leading toward an effective, non-partisan government that can pull the country out of economic stagnation and political gridlock.

Initially, the Rizal Day announcement electrified the nation, changed the political landscape and gained wide approval from contending political camps and the business community. The President won spontaneous applause for her "patriotic" decision to stand down, but the intention behind her decision was not to roll back her plunging popularity rating. The aim is to get the country moving forward in an atmosphere of less politics, national reconciliation and consensus.

Despite the apparent swing of public opinion toward the President, her plan would be stillborn if it were not followed swiftly by economic and political reforms. An immediate consequence of the announcement is that it has stirred up a ferment within the ruling party, Lakas-NUCD, to follow up the Dec. 30 announcement with concrete programs. This is the positive side. The downside, however, is that it has also triggered a mad scramble within the administration coalition to search for a candidate, which could slow down the momentum of change.

To fill the vacuum left by the President's withdrawal, a plethora of names of presidential possibilities has emerged, diverting attention from the urgent need to form a "government of national unity," and to forge a consensus on an economic and political reform agenda for the next 18 months. The preliminary jockeying for advantage in the run-up to selection of presidential candidates can dissipate energies that should be focused on formulating economic and social initiatives and priorities.

The President has convened extraordinary meetings of the Cabinet and senior officials to identify priorities to be unveiled on Jan. 6. Speaker Jose de Venecia has also disclosed that the President is receptive to the formation of a Cabinet of "national reconciliation," to include leaders of various political parties and rebel groups, including the Communist Party of the Philippines.

De Venecia is apparently doing the spadework in forging this coalition and defining a "no politics, no-nonsense government of national unity," but he might be biting more than he can chew. Since most of the political parties or groups are not differentiated by ideological or political philosophies, one might suppose it would not be an insurmountable task to find common grounds of agreement on specific programs that would embrace "national interests." But national interests are a tricky ground for consensus making.

Also, this is the first time the CPP is being considered for membership in a coalition Cabinet, something done by other democracies as early as the end of World War II. We don't wish to hose down the concept of a broad-spectrum Cabinet of national unity, but its proponents would be wise to realize that such a formula also spawns conflict among disparate groups, even though they could also be talking about patriotism and the national interest.

Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, who announced his Cabinet resignation the other day, is the latest Cabinet member to make an exit, in what has so far been a revamp by attrition. But the concept of a Cabinet of national unity involves a revamp that is more sweeping in scale and in the diversity of its composition based on political and economic outlook.

We will know by next Monday the reform initiatives the President will launch. Her Rizal Day announcement has not only redrawn the political horizon, it has also shaken the ground, and the status quo is no longer in place. The President should guard against lagging behind the events she has unleashed with her withdrawal, lest she suffer the fate of the sorcerer's apprentice.

The President should set in motion immediately a new agenda for national reconstruction. When Mao Zedong launched the Cultural revolution, the slogan was, "Let a hundred flowers bloom." But Mao had all the time, and the campaign was nothing if it did not engulf China in a national upheaval, with violent episodes. President Macapagal has only 18 months to complete her "peaceful revolution." She could be swallowed by her own creation.

Starting anew

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

BEGINNING this New Year on a note of optimism, as some of my colleagues have done in their respective columns, has become so corny that I hesitate to follow suit. Rosy predictions of better days, of the silver lining in the darkening clouds and the colorful rainbow after the rains do not inspire—or better still, *delude*—me anymore.

An old observer like me is no longer as comforted as before by cheerful prognostications of better days. Over the years, I have seen the peso fall inexorably, never to rise again to its former strength. In 1998, an economist friend of mine secretly shared with me his fear that the peso rate would rise to the dizzy height of 50 for every single US dollar. I chose not to believe him, but I did not disbelieve him either.

That year the Pollyannas said that things would improve tremendously, especially with Erap sitting in Malacañang. The man of the masses would not let them down, unlike the bedegreed alumni from the Ivy League universities who always knew what the problem was and how to solve it. They failed because they were part of the problem. Their airy solutions were up in the clouds when their feet should have been on solid ground.

Erap for his part could not solve it either but in fact complicated and compounded it. Deservedly dismissed by outraged people, including his disenchanted followers, he was replaced by a relatively unblemished Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. She promised instant and total clean-up of the Estrada debris, but the rubbish is still there.

Accused of prematurely politicking for 2004, she stunned the nation last Monday when she announced that she would not seek the presidency next year. Many praised her for her "sacrifice," but as many others were sure she would later be persuaded to change her mind "in the national interest." Time will tell what her real intentions are. Meanwhile, she remains at the helm of the ship of state as it flounders perilously in its uncertain voyage.

The national scene is hardly inviting. The executive department is besieged by charges of corruption against its top officials, including the President and her spouse and members of her Cabinet. Public works contracts are under a cloud for overpricing by hundreds of millions of pesos that could have been better spent for the relief of the poor. Crime remains rampant in the streets even as agents of the law flout the Bill of Rights and the Rule of Law.

Drug trafficking under the operation of alien syndicates has exacerbated drug addiction beyond the control of our authorities and apparently with their active and lucrative complicity. The Senate investigation of this problem, begun in 2001, is still on hold despite public agitation for its resolution. The chair of one of the three committees that jointly conducted the probe, assured me in December of that year that their report would be released by the middle of January 2002, but it never came. We are now in a new January, but the report is still under wraps.

The House of Representatives became another circus last year, this time over the Mark Jimenez case. His colleagues vowed to protect their hero and martyr from the executive and the courts in the name of separation of powers. They visited him at his mansion in Forbes Park and not in the humble community of Bacoor, Sta. Mesa, where he claims to be a resident. That factual question remains undecided by the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal where it was raised against him one and a half years ago.

Popular faith in the judiciary has diminished notwithstanding the unchallenged integrity of Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide Jr. The Supreme Court itself is under suspicion of its susceptibility to executive dictation and other questionable persuasions. I do not believe this canard but cannot be as skeptical with the lower courts, where integrity is not a stainless virtue. I will also join the provable charge that our courts in general, including the highest tribunal, are not as prompt as they should be in deciding cases within the constitutional deadlines.

Edsa I happened in 1986, but the iniquitous vestiges of the overthrown regime have not been eradicated as directed by the Freedom Constitution 16 years ago. The responsible leaders of that evil era have yet to be punished, and the fortune they stole from the people has yet to be recovered. The fault, as I see it, rests with the justice system as administered by the Supreme Court with less than the necessary firmness that the avarice of the crimes committed, and the magnitude of the plundered wealth demand.

The country has sunk so low that the only direction left it is *up*. That's my optimistic outlook for 2003. The present leadership is bankrupt, but I like to think that somewhere in the rest of the nation are upright and dedicated citizens who are ready to serve and only wait to be called. Fired only by the common good, they will deliver us from impending doom and lead us to the Promised Land.

A window of opportunity

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

THIS time next year, will people look back at the year that was and say that 2003 turned out to be "a very good year"? Or will we thank our lucky stars that we barely squeaked through? Or will we shudder at what we experienced and hope it never happens again? In other words, what are our predictions for the new year?

Sans a magic crystal ball, we will have to rely on ye good olde coconut, review both the encouraging as well as discouraging signals, assign weights to them and then determine whether we've got more going for us than against us.

We know what the minuses are. We have faced them for the past 50 years and more. They were encapsulated by Joseph Estrada, whose promise to turn his back on them was met with a roar of public approval: *kamag-anak, kaibigan, kumpadre* (KKK).

All the country's ills can be attributed to putting one's interests or those of the KKK or the MBAs (*May* Backer *Ako*) above the country's interests. Rules are bent, laws are broken or ignored.

But this year, we have a big plus. God willing, that plus may break the vicious cycle of self, KKK and MBA and start a virtuous cycle of Bayan Muna. If that happens, we will have President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to remember, for subordinating her personal interest to the country's greater ones.

Ms Macapagal's decision not to run in the elections is going to be a big plus for the country for several reasons.

The first, of course, is that now she will have an easier time making decisions, whether on appointments or on policy matters, because there will be one less factor to take into account, and a major one at that: what the impact will be on her chances of winning.

Even if she has been trying very hard (and I give her an A for effort on this) not to consider her own interests in making decisions, some advisers would not be as altruistically motivated (their power derives from hers). And even if her advisers wanted to think solely of the country, the political backers of the potential appointees and the lobby groups pushing for a particular issue would not allow those advisers—or the President herself—to forget the number of votes lost or won by any decision. If that would be bad for the country, then to hell with the country.

Unimpeachable sources tell me that the situation had gotten so bad that even so-called allies of the President were threatening her with withdrawal of support if she did not appoint their "*manok*" to a desired position. What broke the camel's back, I understand, is that a large group tried to pressure her into pushing for house arrest for Joseph Estrada, the "or else" being withdrawal of support. In effect, the political horse-trading had deteriorated into open blackmail.

Announcing that she was no longer in the race was Ms Macapagal's answer to political blackmail—her way of effectively giving them the finger. As simple as that. She has chosen to do what is right, now, than try to be president for another six years. She has actually set Public Choice Theory on its ear, which postulates that politicians make decisions to maximize their chances of reelection rather than to maximize the public good.

This bit about her decision coming from the realization that she would not win in the next election anyway so she might as well take the political high ground and therefore there is nothing self-sacrificing or altruistic about it is hogwash. In the light of political and election history here and abroad, a politician would have to be stupid to make a conclusion about one's "winnability" 15 months before an election—when even what happens two weeks before one can be crucial. Just ask Bill Clinton.

Another reason why the President's decision is a plus is that since she will no longer be considered a rival, her actions will no longer be automatically objected to as "in aid of election" by those who have aspirations—and there are many aspirants. Fewer objections will mean fewer impediments and therefore faster implementation and faster results.

There is more. Politicians whose only claim to fame was their objecting to or "exposing" Ms Macapagal's "mistakes" now have to change their political strategy. The President has set a new standard against which other politicians can be judged. Since they can no longer impugn the President's motives, they now have to come up with constructive programs of their own, or by actually working with the President. Either that or face being labeled an "obstructionist." With one move, the burden of proof is now on their shoulders rather than on the President's. Political cooperation, or, if really called for, constructive criticism on the part of our politicians can only redound to the country's benefit.

The President's decision is, of course, not the only plus this year. There are others, which are as important, although not as sensational. One is our realization that it is not just the government that is to blame for the country's ills but we ourselves—not only for electing undeserving government officials, but also for being party to the corruption that takes place. Another is the function of technology: the use of computers to reduce the opportunities for corruption and wrongdoing (particularly in revenue collection and hopefully counting votes).

But no matter which way one looks at it, the President's decision represents a window of opportunity for brightening this country's bleak political horizon. It is an opportunity we must grab for dear life.

Charter change should move now

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IN ANNOUNCING that she will not run in 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo sought to depoliticize the country by focusing instead on forging national unity, economic recovery and credible elections in 2004. She has pleaded with her party, Lakas, to forget politics for now and concentrate on what needs to be done for the country. Ironically, however, her much-praised self-abnegation appears to have resulted in even greater preoccupation with politics, as various political groups appear to be positioning in what has now become a wide open field. In fact, there is so much political activity going on.

* * *

It was obvious that GMA's sudden decision to withdraw from the race caught her own Cabinet flat-footed. But quickly recovering, the Cabinet held a marathon workshop last Thursday (lasting seven hours) to discuss the priorities that GMA should flesh out to push the "strong republic." This priority list was presented to GMA yesterday and she is expected to announce them to the nation on Jan. 20, the second anniversary of her assumption of office.

Lakas, which was also caught flat-footed by GMA's announcement, doesn't want the same thing to happen again. It will meet on Jan. 8, and doubtless on the agenda will be the question of who will run in GMA's place. The names of various party stalwarts, led by former President Ramos, are being mentioned, along with that of a non-Lakas who has been leading in the surveys, former Sen. Raul Roco.

* * *

On the opposition side, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino will convene in the next few days to discuss the administration's offer for it to join the "government of national unity," as conceptualized by Speaker Jose de Venecia. Last Dec. 20, LDP president Edgardo Angara met with President Macapagal-Arroyo at Ambassador Alfonso Yuchengco's house for dinner and this issue was reportedly on the agenda. The following day, Angara, who was about to leave for Europe with his family, showed up at Speaker De Venecia's residence, presumably for a follow-up discussion, one of many dialogues the two leaders have had since, including overseas calls. Reports indicate that the LDP has given the names of Sen. Rodolfo Biazon and Rep. Agapito Aquino as possible appointees to the Cabinet.

* * *

Meanwhile, stalwarts of the Nationalist People's Coalition were summoned by its president, former Sen. Ernesto Maceda, to the residence of its chair Danding Cojuangco in Quezon City last Thursday evening, even though the latter was in Bacolod. The meeting was to have been called to look at the possibility of fielding Cojuangco, who turns 68 this year, as NPC's presidential bet in 2004. Former President Estrada will, of course, have a big say in the opposition's lineup, as will Cojuangco's money in what will be a frightfully expensive election. In the meantime, Cojuangco's key lieutenant, Ramon Ang, has been talking with De Venecia on the role the NPC would play in the government of national unity.

* * *

That the political scene is percolating is also due to the fact that GMA's disavowal of political ambition is bound to give greater impetus to the Charter-change campaign. Until GMA's announcement, political leaders pushing for charter change had to tiptoe on the subject largely because of her opposition to it, or at best her studied reservations. But Dec. 30 may have changed all that. GMA is now said to be officially neutral toward Charter change, although she was quoted as saying she preferred that there be a president even if a parliamentary system were to be installed. GMA's thinking follows the French model of a president and a prime minister working together.

* * *

In the House, De Venecia and other key leaders are expected to give Charter change a big push once Congress opens on Jan. 13. But in the Senate, kinks have to be ironed out. Senate President Franklin Drilon gave this columnist the impression during our Dec. 31 talk that he has reservations about Charter change, "as there are many problems involved." But I suspect that Drilon could be persuaded to supporting it, especially by the leaders of Region 6. For instance, during lunch on New Year's Day, I ran into Iloilo Rep. Arthur Defensor who is openly batting for Charter change.

* * *

De Venecia is happy that nine senators are now supporting Charter change, and he's confident that such support would snowball in the Senate. Getting the majority of the senators to support a resolution for Congress to convene as a constituent assembly may be easier than passing amendments to the Constitution which needs three-fourths of the votes of each chamber. In the 23-member Senate, 18 votes are needed to pass amendments. It's difficult to predict how the senators would vote since they have their own agenda. To begin with, half of the senators don't have a constituency to speak of, so they may not want regional elections.

* * *

Sen. Loi Estrada can be expected to follow the wishes of her husband who's against charter change at the moment, but their allies, Gregorio Honasan and Tito Sotto, perhaps could be persuaded to agree if the no-election scenario is pushed. The two senators are ending their second terms in 2004, while their colleague Teresa Oreta may be looking for an excuse not to run for reelection in 2004. On the other hand, it's easy to predict that the three senators regarded as possible vice presidential candidates would go against Charter change: Panfilo Lacson, Loren Legarda and Noli de Castro. It is hard to see where the maverick Sen. Joker Arroyo stands with regard to Charter change. Sen. John Osmeña told this column that he would go for charter change only if it will lead to federalism.

No laughing matter

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

I WOULDN'T have done it otherwise, but the controversy during the awards night of the Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines piqued my curiosity enough to compel me to watch a rerun of the televised proceedings.

And from what I had seen, I can believe that the cast and producers of "Dekada '70" had good reason to walk out. And no matter how industry members and watchers say the wiser course would have been to keep one's peace and "move on," I'm happy the Star Cinema people chose to raise their voices—loudly and insistently—on issues that bedevil not just the awards rites, but the entire industry as well.

When opinion-makers react dismissively and contemptuously to show-biz people running for office (and winning), industry stalwarts rise up in indignation, saying entertainers have as much right to enter politics as anybody else, that they deserve respect for the work they do of "bringing joy to the masses." But how could show-biz folk expect the rest of society to take them seriously when they can't even take themselves seriously? And when they botch a most basic function, like an awards night, how can they expect people to believe they can run the nation without a hitch?

Caloocan City Mayor and fading action star Rey Malonzo, who headed the festival organizing committee, dismisses the brouhaha over the "non-nomination" of renowned writer Lualhati Bautista for her story and script on "Dekada '70" as "human error." Bautista's name was not mentioned among the nominees for the two categories, he said, because the cue card bearing her name "accidentally" disappeared. But Malonzo refuses to apologize for the booboo, perhaps believing it was no one's fault.

* * *

BUT someone must have lost that cue card, and that someone needs to be identified and penalized for the error. To insist that "no harm was done" is not only to compound the hurt and insult on Bautista, it also serves to reinforce the culture of incompetence and carelessness that afflicts Filipinos, and not just in the movie industry.

"Drop it and let's all move on," industry leaders plead. But that's precisely the problem with our society. Problems and differences are smoothed over. Faults and weaknesses are allowed to fester, with everyone afraid of confrontation and living in denial until they erupt into full-blown crises. And if rational and reasonable explanations aren't available, everything is boiled down to the personal.

How else to explain Malonzo's assertion that if their movie had won more prizes, then the Star Cinema folks would not have complained? Or his bristling at the doubts raised regarding the competence of the jurors and threatening to name a fisherman from Dagat-dagatan as a judge the next time around? Is that any way for a government official to react to legitimate complaints about the conduct of an affair for which the government spent precious funds?

* * *

BUT then, what can you expect from someone who feels no embarrassment about receiving not one, but two, plaques of appreciation for his role in organizing a festival to which he was appointed?

It's like a producer giving himself a trophy for a movie he bankrolled. But at least the movie producer would have used his own money. What was Malonzo's grand accomplishment? Successfully lobbying with the President to authorize the release of funds to be awarded as incentives to the participating films.

While watching this incredible turn of events, I couldn't help bristling at the sight of a public official being recognized for successfully accessing public money. If anybody deserved an award, it would be me and other law-abiding citizens who regularly pay taxes. It's our money Malonzo was dickering with, after all.

Then, too, what's with this practice of including at least one nominee from each of the film entries in every category? In the supporting performances, especially, the list of nominees was so long it sounded like the presenters were reading grocery lists. This is so Filipino. Please everybody, throw everyone a bone, even if it means the honor ultimately loses meaning and value.

Director Chito Roño also has valid grounds for questioning why his film "Spirit Warriors," which was deemed not good enough for inclusion among the seven "regular" festival entries, ended up being cited as third best film, after "Mano Po" and "Dekada '70." True, the screening committee and the board of jurors had two different and independent sets of members. But how could a single festival operate on two distinct sets of criteria for excellence?

* * *

WHICH brings us to why there is a Metro Manila Film Festival—even without the extended coverage of the entire country—in the first place.

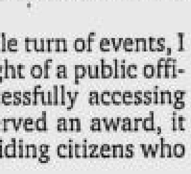
The idea, if I remember right, was to give local movies a shot at the first-class theaters, which used to screen only foreign films, by setting aside the Christmas season exclusively for Filipino movies. But to ensure that the movie going public would not be shortchanged, the Festival was promoted as a chance for producers to come up with "quality" products, such that working on a "*pang*-Festival" film soon came to be recognized as shorthand for working on a film that aspired to artistry and quality.

In the decades since, standards have slipped considerably, especially after Festival organizers, usually government officials, began touting the box-office earnings over the artistic significance of the Festival.

If the MMFF(P) is ever to retain an ounce of credibility, it should return to its origins as a showcase of quality, and escape the clutches of politicians who've turned it into a tawdry spectacle, an exercise in mediocrity, a joke.

A world we never knew

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY



Bambi L. Harper

IT wasn't that we didn't know evil existed. You cannot be brought up as a Catholic without having a concept of evil, even if it is stereotyped as a demon with horns and a tail and not some mayor in a small town with a taste for little girls or a governor with sadistic tendencies. As a matter of fact, their defenders may not even admit that anything is wrong, and in that attitude lies the problem. It's not just that all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to remain silent, but evil triumphs because it isn't even recognized as evil.

We are very sophisticated and worldly wise these days. There are no devils, there is no Satan and there is no hell. Acts may not even be considered good or bad. (I do not know what happens to free will then? What if I do want to go to hell? If I were Lucifer, I would be very annoyed.) In which case, how would one view the Sept. 11 events? The destruction of the Twin Towers with the attendant loss of lives was not an evil act?

Evil or not, it has brought about many changes in the American psyche and perhaps even in others who somehow also believe in America's invincibility. My friend Susan, who loves New York, was above all touched by the manner by which Americans came together. Not only touched, but also envious, she said, because we Filipinos appear to be incapable of uniting whether we're in crisis, with our finances in deep s--t and the majority of our people in a perpetual state of fasting and abstinence. Our leaders hardly set the example since all they seem capable of doing is thinking of the next election.

But going back to the subject of the Americans. Aside from that enviable unity, that ability to "rally 'round the flag," the search to find meaning in tragedy, the effort to ensure that those who died did not do so in vain are likewise admirable. The new catch phrase in the United States appears to be the words uttered by Todd Beamer just before he and several others on Flight 93 tried to prevent the hijackers from ramming the plane into another building: "Let's roll."

Still on a positive note, columnist Liz Smith draws from the Internet and compares this Christmas and last Christmas:

"Last Christmas we thought about the things we didn't have. This Christmas we think about all the things we do have.

"L.C. we were putting wreaths on our doors. T.C. we place wreaths on the graves of heroes.

"L.C. we lit candles to decorate. T.C. we light candles to commemorate.

"L.C. we dug deep to find money to fly home. T.C. we dig deep to find the courage to do so.

"L.C. we were getting on each other's nerves. T.C. we are getting on our knees.

"L.C. we wondered how to give our children the things money can buy. T.C. we want to give them the things money can't buy.

"L.C. We sang carols. T.C. we sing anthems.

"L.C. we thought angels were in heaven. T.C. we know some are here on Earth.

"L.C. we were spreading gossip. T.C. we are contemplating spreading the gospel."

There are obviously lessons for all of us to learn from the Sept. 11 tragedy. No doubt it means different things to different people. Some view it as the result of America's flawed foreign policy or their double standard or even as karma for whatever they may have done in the past. But if we believe that we are all part of that great island of mankind, there must be some personal meaning in it for us.

Perhaps it was the manner that New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani led his constituents or comforted the bereaved. (Does anybody remember how Mayor Antonio Villegas acted after the bombing at Plaza Miranda?) Then there were the firemen who perished in the line of duty and, not least, the men of Flight 93 who took on the hijackers. Whether you wish to view this as individual human acts of courage or Americans at their best makes no difference. The point is that they rose to the occasion.

They call them defining moments, and in our history we have had similar moments. It would be interesting to hear from our readers as to what these were and who were the men who rose or didn't rise to the occasion. We're not very good at honoring our heroes, you must admit, seeing as I'm still waiting for that memorial to the Katipuneros, to the guerrillas of World War II and to the Battle of Manila. Don't we think we owe these people anything or are we a bunch of hypocrites who merely exploit the idea of *utang na loob?* It seems that gratitude only goes as far as our politics: when we win an election, we feel obliged to pay off our lackeys with government jobs whether they're qualified or not.

Americans are saying they will never be the same again, that Sept. 11 changed them in one way or another. I would like to think that we learned something, too, although after all the crises we have been through, I don't have much hope, for despite all the nice speeches and all the avowals of love for the poor, the majority of our people appear to be worse off than ever. But you never know: Hope springs eternal, and so on.

With that in mind, let us meet the new year with renewed confidence that at least 50 percent of what has been stolen will be returned to the people one way or the other.

Firefly in the dark

YOUNG BLOOD

Kyna de Zuñiga

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WHAT is darkness but the absence of light? If we never knew the sun, would we be content with the night?

I can't recall when I became aware of the light—or rather, of the darkness that overshadowed my existence. There was no earth-shattering revelation, no climactic confession. My awakening was more like the careful peeling away of onion layers. In hindsight, I suppose it couldn't have happened any other way because Mama is not the type to keep the truth hidden. Revelation came from the little things that just added up: My surname was different from Mama's. Papa could only visit us since he lived with his "real" family. Papa was a secret. Or rather, I was the secret; I was the illegitimate child.

One day, I was seated in our old Gallant with Mama driving. Vehicles zigzagged impatiently through the intersection, but to me time seemed to stop. Mama was telling me: "Strive for excellence. God has blessed you with potentials to be developed. Show everyone what you can do, then they'll see that even if you come from a 'broken' family, you are not dysfunctional." Then the light turned green. The car's engine purred and we made our way home.

My preschooler's life of play went on as if nothing had changed. But something had changed. Young as I was, I had made a choice unconsciously: the choice to excel.

On March 18, 1988, I stood in front of the crowd in an auditorium, adorned with a gold medal proclaiming me as the "Most Outstanding Student." It was my graduation from kindergarten. I stood proudly as the audience clapped and cameras flashed. I was not quite 6 yet, and I had my first taste of formal recognition. It made me feel good and important, like I had stepped out of the shadow of anonymity.

From then on, recognition was no stranger. As I moved up the ladder in the academic world, it fell in step with me. My achievements in curricular and co-curricular activities, all attained through hard work, earned me scholarships. I was proud of my scholarships not so much because of the prestige but because, through my own efforts, I had become less dependent on my father financially. I knew he was willing to give such support, but I didn't want to have to ask for anything.

Papa attended all the awarding ceremonies and even escorted me up the stage. He played the part of the proud parent very well (he was sincerely proud of me). But though I knew he loved me, I still felt resentful. To me, he was like the grasshopper that feasted on the ant's hard-earned harvest. It was not he who taught me good study habits and monitored my progress. It was not he who had to deal with crises as I grew up. Mama did all these. She was both a mother and father, and it was she who deserved credit. Many times I wanted to take Mama's surname if only to make it clear that although Papa's blood flowed through my veins, I was neither a part nor a product of his clan.

College brought me more recognition. For three consecutive semesters, I earned a perfect average, and my reputation was spreading. Strangers would come up to me and say, "Hey, *'di ba ikaw 'yung* top *ng* batch (weren't you the top in our batch)?" There were other rumors about my achievements, most of them were exaggerated.

I found the attention flattering, but I still felt troubled. I became extremely conscious that society was watching my every move, judging my performance, waiting for me to either triumph or fail, the latter being the juicier topic for the grapevine. So I resolved never to fail.

I put pressure on myself to reach higher levels of performance. I would ponder over questions long after the exams were over and could not forgive myself for the tiniest mistakes. I did away with rest and recreation to pour over textbooks. Although burning with fever, I would drag myself to class. I never knew when to stop studying. I couldn't tell exactly when I had given my best. My motto changed from "Strive for excellence" to "Good is not good when better is expected." Nothing I achieved was ever enough. Nothing gave me a sense of fulfillment. My desire to excel had become a struggle for perfection.

Stress and fatigue soon took their toll. One day, the inevitable breakdown came. I sat on the cold, wooden floor of my room, curled in a fetal position. In the dark hours before dawn, nothing disturbed the silence except my sobs. Confused, I kept asking myself, "Why? Why the incessant need to perform?" The obsession to stay at the top drove me so much that I forgot about my physical health as well as mental and emotional well-being. At some point I had known that no award was worth giving up my sanity for, yet I continued on my self-destructive course. Why?

In the midst of my soul-searching, I felt Mama's arms embrace my huddled figure. "Shhh," she said. "Stop torturing yourself. Your happiness matters more than what everyone else thinks. You don't need to prove anything. All I wish for you is to be happy."

I had been pushing myself because of that unconscious need to prove society wrong, to prove that bastard children weren't any less human, that they were capable of achieving as much as anyone else, that even without a parent they could shine. Unrecognized in Papa's world as his daughter, I wanted the rest of society to recognize me on my own merits. That hunger for acknowledgement, for validation of my worth, fueled my ambition. That ambition propelled me to the heights of success but also hurled me down to the pits of depression.

Now I realize that in my life there will always be tension—between secrecy and openness, between anonymity and recognition. My challenge is to reconcile the darkness of my past and the light of my present, to strike a balance between my striving for excellence and recognizing my inherent worth.

The first step, I believe, is to accept my past, for what else is there for me to do? I cannot change the circumstances through which I came into this world. Nothing will ever change my parents' mistakes. But I can change myself. History and society may have imposed restrictions, but they cannot dictate my future. My origins may be shrouded in secrecy and carry a stigma, but my destination is illuminated by my own inner vision and resolve.

The other night, as I was deep in reverie, the darkness of my room was broken by a streak of light. Where we live, fireflies are rare, so to find one inside my room was something really special. As I watched the little creature dance an ecstatic calypso, I couldn't help but wonder: What are fireflies without the darkness to illuminate?

Kyna de Zuñiga, 20, began her new life in environmental sciences at the Ateneo de Manila University.

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Nothing honorable about Jimenez

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia says the US lawyers of Mark Jimenez will work out an "honorable and dignified settlement" for him with US authorities.

I don't see anything honorable or dignified about Jimenez. He is charged with criminal offenses. And he gave himself up because he was afraid of Philippine jails (and wisely so).

His lawyers may be able to work out a deal for a reduced jail sentence if Jimenez pleads guilty. I don't see anything honorable or dignified about that, either. In fact, De Venecia is saying Jimenez is guilty.

What De Venecia and most other Filipinos can't seem to get through their heads is that in America everyone is equal before the law. There have been a few powerful US congressmen who went to jail for such petty crimes as cheating on their office franking privileges.

Filipinos (especially *trapos*) love to use courtly, sonorous and dignified words, regardless of the situation they are talking about, and sometimes they sound rather pompously silly. Whenever US officials round up some illegal aliens and/or Filipinos accused of crimes for deportation, there is always a stir about "human rights" or "dignity" when they are handcuffed.

Never mind the safety of the crew or the plane. Filipinos are not noted for prim and proper behavior. In fact, they frequently demonstrate volatile and impulsive behavior. Jimenez has demonstrated such traits often enough.

—ROBERT HANAN
Unit 25, 17 Bayview St.,
Runaway Bay, Qld 4216, Australia

GMA earned her place in history

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's decision not to run in the 2004 election is the greatest sacrifice a leader can offer to the country. Devoid of any political motives, all her actions and decisions from hereon will unite this nation that has been so divided internally, sapping our national energy.

With this act of statesmanship, the President has impressed on all our national leaders the need to set aside the politics of national self-destruction and unite for an authentic national resurrection.

Our people have had enough of the bickering which echoed and resonated in the minds and perceptions of our people, leading them to despair and pessimism. This time, with her renunciation of political plans in the 2004 election, we are again at the dawn of a national genesis, so crucial and strategic to our survival and economic recovery in these perilous times.

The President has finally earned her place in history with that shining moment on Rizal Day. It is now incumbent for all sectors of society and the political opposition to close ranks behind her leadership as mother of the nation until she turns the mantle of responsibility to her elected successor.

—VIC DEL FIERRO JR.,
Coalition of Marginalized Party
List Groups, 104 Gaiety St.,
Better Living, Parañaque City

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

What about children in jail?

DUE to the holiday season, authorities and even courts are extending leniency to important people like former President Joseph Estrada, who was allowed by the Sandiganbayan to join a faith healing session in Caloocan City, and Rep. Mark Jimenez, who was given VIP treatment (no handcuffs) when he went to the US Embassy, escorted by Speaker Jose de Venecia, no less. This is what compassion means.

But, what about the children who have been thrown into the company of common criminals in Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales and Baguio jails? Did they spend their Christmas behind bars? Where is the compassion for those unfortunate children?

It's time the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Justice looked into the welfare and case status of these children. They might also need health care. They should undergo medical check-ups, and even STD and HIV tests, since some might have been raped by adults.

The Preda Foundation Inc.'s investigative report "Children in Prison: Tortured and Abused," details many cases of children who are in jail. This is a disgrace to our country.

Calling the attention of the DOJ. The children have no voice. This is a small one that cries to the heavens.

Justice to all children in jail!

—ANTONIO S. CRUZ,
L.V. Locsin Bldg., Ayala Ave.,
Makati City

Talking too much politics

IT gets into one's nerves to listen to some media people telling us that the nation's problems are caused by politicians talking too much politics. I'm really sorry that this invariably gets that kind of reaction from me. I wonder if these self-righteous women and men of the broadcast and print are really serious about what they are saying.

I agree that some politicians are indeed unreasonably and disgustingly loquacious when it comes to politics. But one should ask: "Who's making them talk anyway? Who's giving them the opportunity to dominate people's time and space? And in the final accounting (read: counting profits), who is really benefiting from their grandstanding? Will the news sell if Erap, MJ, Nani, Ping, etc. are not in the TV news clips? Would a Mang Pandoy or an Aling Maria listen or watch Korina, Mike, Karen or Mel if they just report the traffic condition along Edsa?

Politicians know that without their whining, "TV Patrol" or "Saksi" will just be a 60-second flash report because there will be fewer commercial patrons who will sponsor a so-called TV or radio news report that nobody wants to watch or hear.

Let's just be honest about it: politicians enjoy talking because the media enjoy (and make money by) making them talk. If there are "envelopmental" reporters, it's very likely that there are also hypocrites in their ranks. If media people really care for the country and believe that there's "too much politics" and this is causing us a lot of trouble, for heaven's sake, don't let these politicians talk.

—JOSE GUTAY, OFM,
Bagbag, Novaliches,
Quezon City

An embarrassment to Congress

THERE was something terribly wrong when the Speaker and the Majority Floor Leader of the House of Representatives acted as security escorts of Rep. Mark Jimenez when he went to the US Embassy to confer with embassy officials regarding his extradition case.

Jimenez is an embarrassment to the House of Representatives and a disgrace to this country. He did not deserve the special treatment accorded him by the House leadership. And they had the gall to even talk about his honor and dignity?

The people were certainly hoping he would bring with him to the United States Speaker Jose de Venecia, Representatives Neptali Gonzales Jr., Willie Villarama, Didagen Dilangalen and his other House supporters—hopefully for good.

The country will move on without them.

—FERDIE SIBAL,
18 Green Leaves St.,
Capitol Green Village,
Tandang Sora, Quezon City

Replicas of P1,000 bills

RECENTLY, tellers in the Meralco office in Caloocan received replicas of P1,000 bills. I learned that these bills are given as souvenirs to the retired employees of the Bangko Sentral.

I would like to suggest to the authorities, particularly to Bangko Sentral officials, that such souvenir items be made larger or smaller in size so that dishonest or unscrupulous persons will not be able to circulate it. Some people have been able to pass them off as the true item with real purchasing power.

—FRANCIS SOBREVIÑAS,
8 Fuse St., Meralco Village,
Marilao, Bulacan

PhilHealth *Advisory*

No. 01-001-2003

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China, South Korea have little clout with North

NEWS ANALYSIS

Martin Parry

BEIJING—Talks between China and South Korea aimed at defusing the North Korean nuclear crisis are of little value with neither side having sufficient clout to influence the rogue regime, analysts said Thursday.

"I don't think there's going to be anything from these talks. It's a meaningless exercise that's going nowhere," said Lee Dong-Bok, an analyst specializing in North Korean negotiating behavior with the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. "North Korea is an international issue and it has got to be taken to the UN Security Council."

Lee, a retired member of the Korean National Assembly who is considered a pioneer in improving North-South Korean relations, said China no longer had the influence it once wielded.

"China has been taking a very open-ended position on this matter," he told AFP. "As a matter of principle it has been voicing opposition to a Korean peninsula with nuclear capabilities. "(But) China's leaders have very limited leverage in Pyongyang particularly when North Korea is governed by its current leadership." He added though that Beijing is "not in support of the international community using sticks."

South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Tae-Shik met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing Thursday. Another South Korean envoy is scheduled to travel to Moscow for similar talks Friday.

China and Russia have long been considered North Korea's closest allies.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said Seoul and Beijing had agreed in the talks to "work together" on resolving the issue, but no specific action was mentioned.

The diplomatic charge is taking place as a sombre mood settles on the Korean peninsula, with the war of words between Pyongyang and Washington intensifying.

While US President George W. Bush has said a solution to the crisis could be found through diplomacy, North Korea responded by vowing to counter Washington's "provocative and military pressure" by beefing up its own military strength.

Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, a China-North Korea expert based at the Strategic Studies Group in Taiwan's Tamkang University, agreed that there was no quick fix to the crisis. He said the Asian region was preoccupied with a looming war against Iraq and wanted the Korean issue put on a back burner.

"The shadow over everyone is the war on Iraq. Much of the regional powers want to confine the issue of North Korea until a later time," he said. "And there's not too much China can offer at this stage. It has a handful of domestic issues, and a lot of new political appointees waiting in line to occupy it."

He also said Thursday's talks were of little consequence. "I don't see Seoul or Beijing can have any definite or constructive conclusion out of the current situation," he said. "The key still lies with the attitude of Pyongyang."

One diplomat closely following the talks, however, said China remained an important cog in the resolution issue. "China is a very important country in terms of helping to resolve this issue," said the diplomat. "China maintains some influence on North Korea, although exactly how much is anyone's guess. It's a traditional ally of North Korea, and North Korea depends on China for economic aid and maybe also for moral support."

The Chinese government has repeatedly said it is "deeply concerned" about the crisis and has called on all parties to resolve the issue peacefully and through dialogue. *AFP*

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Bush to Saddam: Day of reckoning coming

CRAWFORD, Texas—President George W. Bush warned Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Thursday his "day of reckoning is coming" and Western warplanes dumped leaflets over Iraq urging citizens to tune into US military radio.

Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tareq Aziz, earlier accused Washington of "an imperialist design" to invade his country regardless of the verdict of UN weapons inspectors who are combing Iraq for alleged weapons of mass destruction.

Bush told reporters at his Crawford, Texas, ranch there was little evidence the Iraqi leader would disarm peacefully.

"For 11 long years the world has dealt with him, and now he's got to understand his day of reckoning is coming and therefore he must disarm voluntarily," Bush said. "Saddam Hussein, hopefully he realizes we're serious."

Bush spoke as more than 11,000 American troops prepared to head for the Gulf amid US preparations for a possible invasion of Iraq to force an end to any programs Saddam has to make nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

Bush said he hoped for a peaceful resolution, but added, "It's his (Saddam's) choice to make."

"He is a man who likes to play games and charades, and... the first indication isn't very positive that he will voluntarily disarm."

Baghdad denies it currently has weapons of mass destruction programs.

Aircraft taking part in US-British patrols over southern Iraq on Thursday attacked Iraqi air defense communications facilities near Al Kut, about 160 km southeast of Baghdad, after Iraqi forces fired anti-aircraft artillery at coalition aircraft, the Florida-based US Central Command said.

Bush says he has made no decision on whether to attack Iraq, which was ordered by the UN Security Council in November to disarm or face serious consequences.

Aziz said Washington was planning to invade his country as part of a plan to control the region's oil supplies.

"When they continue their preparations for the war of aggression, what does that mean? It doesn't mean that they are genuinely afraid of an imaginary Iraqi threat. It means that they have an imperialist design," he said in English to several groups of European activists in Baghdad to show their opposition to war on Iraq.

"That design is to invade Iraq, to occupy Iraq and use the national resources of Iraq for the purposes of the American capitalist regime," he said.

"When America becomes stronger economically, when America takes over the whole oil of the region and puts it in its hands, it is going to pressure politically and economically every country that needs oil," Aziz said. *Reuters*

US forces in Gulf 64,000, expected to grow by 25,000

WASHINGTON—A US military buildup in the Gulf will add about 25,000 troops to the estimated 64,000 already in the region, Pentagon officials said Thursday.

The deployments, slated to occur over coming weeks, will involve mainly the army's 3rd Infantry Division in Fort Stewart, Georgia and squadrons of air force of F-15 fighters and B-1 bombers.

But additional deployment orders are expected to go out as the United States steps up pressure on Iraq.

"Over the next several weeks you are going to see a steady force buildup," said a defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Some of it will be visible. Some you'll miss."

"There are lots of units in these deployment orders," the official said.

US forces are located in the following countries, according to US military officials:

- Kuwait. About 16,000 troops, mostly US Army and many of whom have been training in the desert near the Iraqi border.

Headquarters for the army in the Central Command are located at Camp Doha. The army's V Corps and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force also have set up headquarters here in preparation for possible military action.

The 3rd Infantry Division, which received deployment orders this week, already has an armored brigade in Kuwait and is expected to send two more as part of the largest deployment of ground forces to the region since the 1991 Gulf War.

Equipment for at least two armored brigades are in the country, but more tanks and heavy equipment continue to flow into Kuwait. A 450-member army task force with 24 AH-64 Apache helicopter gunships arrived last year. The army says a brigade combat team of some 2,500-3,000 troops are taking part in Operation Desert Spring, a continuous exercise.

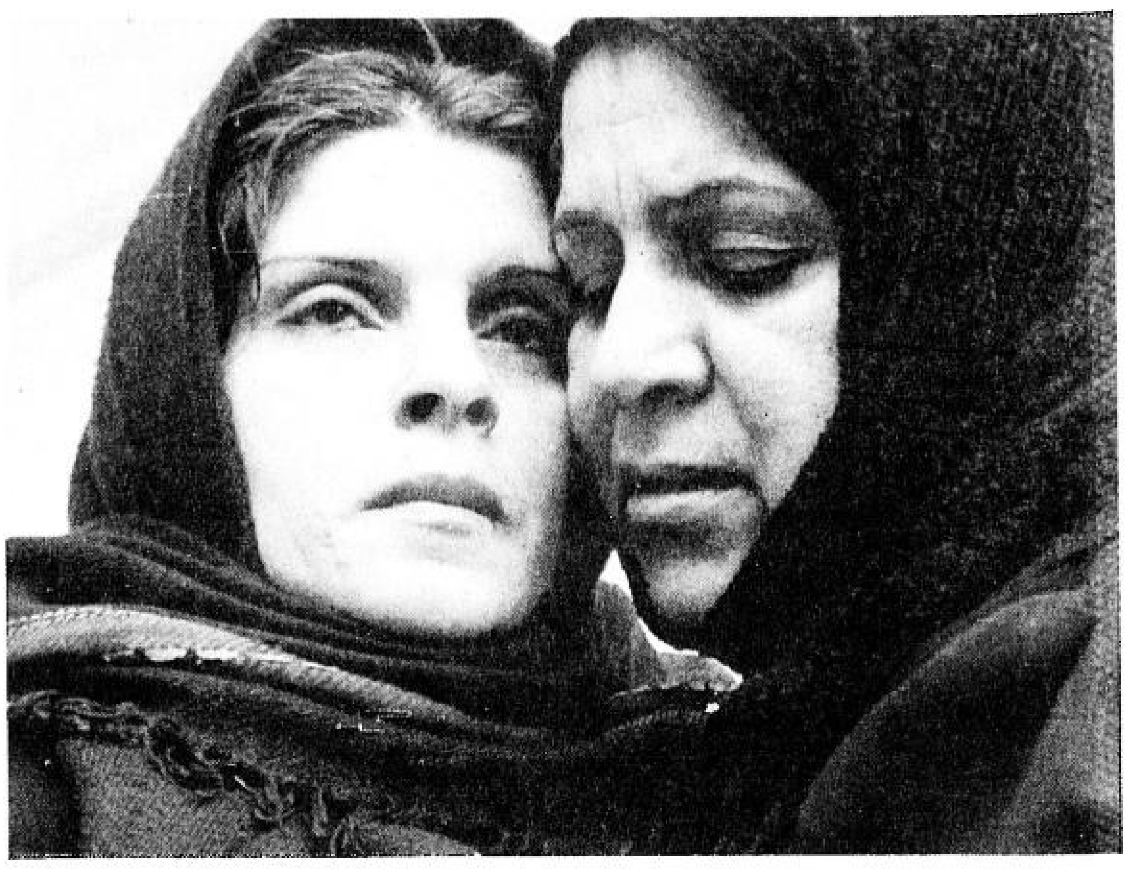
Two air bases are used by US and British forces in the region, Al-Jaber and Ali Salem. In the past A-10 Thunderbolt anti-tank planes and fighter aircraft have been stationed at al Jaber and British Tornados at Ali Salem.

- Saudi Arabia. About 4,500 troops, mostly air force based at Prince Sultan air base (PSAB) in the desert south of Riyadh.

The Afghan air campaign was directed from a combined air operations center that opened there late last year. The base also is a hub for US fighter aircraft, E-3 AWACS radar planes, other surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, and air refueling planes.

The Saudi government has sent mixed signals about whether it will allow its territory and airspace to be used for an attacks against Iraq.

- Navy. About 15,000 to 16,000 sailors and marines. The aircraft carrier USS Constellation is in the region with a seven ship battle group. The carrier USS Harry S Truman is in the Mediterannean. *AFP*



THE MOTHER (left) of Palestinian Tareq Douas, shot dead by Israeli troops, is comforted at her home by a relative during his funeral in the Jabalia refugee camp near Gaza City, Jan. 2. Israeli troops shot dead three Palestinian youths, one aged 15 and the other two 16, who they said had been trying to attack a Jewish settlement in northern Gaza. REUTERS

Israel president seeks new tack as death toll in Mideast mounts

JERUSALEM—Israeli President Moshe Katsav was in the forefront Friday of New Year attempts to ease the crisis in the Middle East, as the military incursions continued and the death toll rose.

Katsav made a powerful call Thursday for a "new strategy" to end more than two years of violence that has cost close to 3,000 lives, the latest of which was a 70-year-old Israeli whose charred body was found in the Jordan Valley.

On the ground Israeli troops launched an overnight incursion into a refugee camp in the West Bank and surrounded the home of the first female Palestinian suicide bomber, witnesses said Friday.

Twenty jeeps penetrated into the Al Amari refugee camp, in the Palestinian autonomous zone of Ramallah in the northern West Bank, and took up positions by the family home of Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian woman to die, last January, in a suicide attack on Israeli targets.

Troops ordered nearby residents to leave their homes, warning that they were about to dynamite them.

Earlier Thursday, a Palestinian gunmen was killed in a siege in a northern Israeli home after he fired one shot and his rifle jammed.

Israeli forces also launched series of raids in the Gaza Strip, smashing homes and rounding up suspects.

Amid the violence, Katsav said he suspected the solutions offered by the left and right in their election manifestos were redundant.

"I don't see a solution to the problem of terrorism coming from the left nor the right. We need a new strategy," Katsav, a former member of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Likud party, told army radio

"The time has come to examine whether Israel is heading in the right direction."

Katsav did not say what this new direction might be.

Palestinian factions are also due to meet soon in Cairo to examine where their 27-month armed struggle against Israeli occupation has left them, with their economy in ruins and more than 2,000 of their people dead.

Katsav made his remarks as he visited the families of victims of last week's Palestinian attack against the southern West Bank Jewish settlement of Otniel.

Even as he was talking, Israeli police confirmed that a charred corpse found in the West Bank was 70-year-old salesman Massud Alon, whose death had been claimed by the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

In a conciliatory move, Israel and the United States have agreed on a mechanism to transfer frozen customs duties Israel owes to the Palestinians, an Israeli official said Thursday.

"We reached an agreement with the United States under which US accountants will monitor the Palestinian Authority's accounts to make sure the unfrozen funds are not used to finance terrorism," the official said on condition of anonymity.

"The payments will start in a few days on a monthly basis, but if we see that the money is diverted to finance terrorist activities, we will freeze them again," the official added. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Guardian for 'Eve'

MIAMI—A Miami lawyer said Thursday he is petitioning a Florida court to appoint a guardian for "Eve"—the baby purportedly cloned by the Raelians—as the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) took an interest in the celebrated case. "I was concerned that, if this is true, this child is an abused child, that it could have some serious genetic, fatal problems and that the child was being exploited by Clonaid," lawyer Bernard Siegel said by phone from his office here. Last week Brigitte Boisselier—formerly a French chemist and now president of the Las Vegas-based Clonaid—announced that a baby girl cloned from her 31-year-old US mother was born on December 26 by Caesarian section at a hospital outside the United States. *AFP*

200 die from bitter winter

PARIS—The death toll from a bitterly cold winter in Poland was nearing 200 Friday while several other European countries faced the prospect of devastating flooding as river levels continued to rise amid heavy rain. Most of the 183 victims of Poland's cold snap were men in their 40s who died of hypothermia after drinking heavily and going to sleep in the open. A quarter of them were vagrants who slept in doorways and on stairwells. Meanwhile residents in Belgium, Britain, Germany and Portugal were preparing for heavy flooding as water levels rose. Britain was on high flood alert as heavy rain pounded large parts of the country, hampering rail transport and worrying homeowners in vulnerable areas following weeks of almost uninterrupted downpours. With sodden ground and rivers reaching the tops of their banks after a wet start to the new year, officials feared a repeat of the floods that hit Britain in October 2000 which claimed 19 lives and left one billion pounds of damage. *AFP*

More attacks from Yemen cell

SAN'A, Yemen—Two Islamic militants accused of killing three American Christian missionaries and a senior leftist Yemeni politician had drawn up plans to attack other foreigners, journalists and Yemeni political leaders, security officials said Thursday. The murder suspects, Ali al-Jarallah and Abed Abdul Razak Kamel, gave police a list of eight targets during police questioning, the officials said on condition of anonymity. They are among 30 people detained so far in connection with Monday's killing of three missionaries and wounding of a fourth at a Baptist missionary hospital in southern Yemen and the slaying of Jarallah Omar, deputy leader of Yemen's Socialist Party, last week. Police arrested five suspected militants on Thursday. No charges have been filed and it was unclear how many detainees were believed to be directly linked to alleged attack plans. *AP*

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Tel. No. (074)443-9255
Fax No. (074)443-8971
E-mail: inq_baguio@inquirer.com.ph

SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU
23 Aurora St., Old Albay District
Legazpi City
Tel. No. (052) 820-8402
Fax No. (052) 820-1274
E-mail: inq_bicol@inquirer.com.ph

Across the NATION

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

VISAYAS BUREAU
c/o Cebu Daily News
18-15 Escario St., Cebu City
Tel. Nos. (032) 233-0346/233-0349
Fax No. (032) 232-9938
E-mail: pdivis@skyinet.net

MINDANAO BUREAU
FEP Printing Corp. Bldg.
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Cops say they're holding Abu leader behind Indons' kidnap

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The Abu Sayyaf leader who was arrested at the port here on Thursday was one of those responsible for the abduction of three Indonesian fishermen in Sulu.

Lt. Col. John Martir, deputy commander of the Marines Forces South, said Merang Abante, who carried a bounty of P1 million for his capture dead or alive, was one of the bandits who led the sea jacking of a tugboat off Capual Island in Luuk, Sulu on June 18, 2002.

During the sea jacking, Abante's group snatched Indonesians Muntu Jacobus Winowatan, Jul Kipli and Pieter Lerrich and Yoel Ferdinan.

But Ferdinan was able to escape on June 20 by pretending to take a pee and running until he reached a village.

The villagers then helped him get to authorities.

Martir said that contrary to earlier reports, Abante was arrested by operatives from the Philippine Marines and the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) Team.

Chief Supt. Simeon Dizon Jr., Western Mindanao police chief, told the INQUIRER that Abante's arrest was covered by a warrant issued by a Basilan court.

"Whether a suspect has reward or not as long as there is a warrant, we will arrest him," Dizon said.

Martir said Abante was a trusted aide of Khadaffy Janjalani, acknowledged leader of the Abu Sayyaf.

He said the suspect also figured in several Abu Sayyaf operations including the March 2000 Mahadji incident and the raid on Dos Palmas in Palawan on April 27, 2001.

During that raid, the bandits took several hostages including Americans Martin and Gracia Burnham and Guillermo Sobero.

Sobero was beheaded on June 12, 2002 as an "Independence Day presentation" to President Macapagal-Arroyo while Martin Burnham was killed during a military rescue operation in Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte.

Meanwhile, Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya said another Abu Sayyaf member was arrested in Basilan also on Thursday.

Maid Sampang alias Abu Mike was apprehended inside his hideout on Baluk-baluk Island in Lantawan town. Soldiers seized an M-14 rifle from him.

Abaya said that Sampang belonged to an Abu Sayyaf group led by Hussin Madjirul. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

7 fishermen declared missing off Scarborough

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Seven fishermen from Zambales province who were last seen on Dec. 24 on board their mechanically troubled boat near the disputed Scarborough Shoal off the coast of the South China Sea, were reported still missing.

The seven fishermen left their village, Barangay Ibayo Wawandue in Subic, on board the MV Prince PJ at 5 p.m. on Dec. 16, according to Alma Fabon, the sister of missing boat captain Jules Basan, 27. Fabon said her brother Jules was to get married on Jan. 18.

Aside from Basan, also declared missing by authorities were Aldrin Kotamura, 25; Raffy Dimateo, 24; Claudio Fajardo, 22; Marvin Moreno, 23; Ronald Pador, 27 and Edmund Oribia, 25. All are residents of Wawandue Purok 4 and they originally came from General Santos City.

Ceferino Polo, chair of the fishermen's association in Barangay Ibayo Wawandue, said several fishermen from various Zambales towns had reported to the radio station of Radyo ng Bayan-Subic that the Prince PJ crew was last seen in the western part of the disputed islands, some 160 miles from Subic.

The boat was loaded with 18 tubs of fish that the seven caught when it suffered engine trouble, according to one report reaching Polo.

So far, Polo said he has received no reports indicating that Chinese authorities that maintained stations at the group of islands had taken the seven for possible encroachment.

China has built stations on Scarborough Shoal despite claims by the Philippines that the area was part of Philippine territorial waters.

The claim has not been settled although there had been proposals for the contending parties to deal with the dispute peacefully.

Polo said search and rescue efforts made by his group since Dec. 25 had been abandoned due to strong waves. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Palawan plans suit over gas project share

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes yesterday announced that the provincial government might pursue a legal case against the national government in the first quarter of this year to insist on the province's legal share in the Camago-Malampaya natural gas project.

According to the governor, the national government panel has not sent a word regarding a counter-offer of the province in a memorandum of agreement being drafted to avoid any legal conflict in the future.

Reyes and the provincial council previously abandoned the idea of pursuing the legal share from the gas find since they thought it would be a long legal battle because President Macapagal-Arroyo already announced that the gas project is not within the territorial jurisdiction of Palawan.

"I will ask the permission of the provincial council to allow me to hire a panel of lawyers from Manila and even foreign lawyers because this might lead us to an international court," Reyes said.

The agreement contains a provision that each municipality and this city will receive their share through financial packages and various forms of government projects.

The legal action is meant, Reyes explained, to resolve once and for all whether the Malampaya gas project is within Palawan's jurisdiction.

If it is indeed in the province, the local government code mandates that 40 percent of the proceeds go to Palawan.

President Macapagal-Arroyo last year said Malampaya is near but not in Palawan's territorial jurisdiction.

The governor refused to say what prompted him to study the legal case. *Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

PLAYGROUND
Children appear to enjoy basking in the sun at the Irisan dump in Baguio City despite the foul odor that the dump emits and the possibly toxic smoke that comes out of its belly.

TOOTS SOBERANO

Farmers to get health insurance

SOME 3 million agrarian reform beneficiaries will be enrolled in the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) after the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) entered into a partnership with Philhealth in an effort to bring health insurance to the countryside.

In a statement, the DAR said it signed two agreements with Philhealth to give farmers and their families access to quality and affordable health care.

The first agreement defines the framework, processes and guidelines of the partnership while the second establishes a tie-up with four health district boards covering areas under the Belgian Integrated Agrarian Reform Support Program (BIARSP).

"With the signing of the agreement, farmers are brought to the mainstream of the government agenda of providing universal coverage of the social health insurance program," said Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza.

The DAR and Philhealth will share the program's costs.

GETTING RID OF 'EYESORES'

Iloilo anti-begging measures draw flak, support

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—After a meal of seaweeds, crabs and stewed fish on Dec. 30, more than 50 Badjaos thanked their hosts and lingered awhile to discuss whether would stay or leave the city as soon as possible.

The city council recently passed an ordinance to check the presence of beggars, among them scores of Badjaos and the indigenous Ati of Panay, sparking a debate on whether action could help displaced indigenous peoples (IP).

Of the two groups of indigenous peoples (IP), the Badjaos drew the most attention because they appear to be more ubiquitous and annoying that some people give them alms to dismiss them quick.

Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas was quoted saying that the Badjaos are an "eyesore." City social welfare officer Clarita Dignadice said the mayor wanted them to leave before Christmas, and when that wasn't possible, before the Dinagyang Festival on the third week of January.

The Badjaos are often referred to as the Philippine "sea gypsies," because they used to live in houseboats that frequent the waters around numerous islands of the Sulu Archipelago. Today they have houses along the coasts but what they earn from fishing and pearl diving are hardly enough to provide for their food.

After pirates attacked them or shanghaied their boats, many of them left.

Badjaos started coming to Iloilo City two years ago, first in trickles and then in groups. They live in public places, like the Iloilo Freedom Grandstand, that have easy access to the sea where they clean themselves. They earn P50 to P100 a day begging on streets, often by tapping on passengers when their jeeps stop at busy intersections.

The push for the anti-mendicancy ordinance came from the city social welfare and development office that chairs the Task Force Badjao. In July, Dignadice wrote Treñas that the proliferation of mendicants warrants the passage of the ordinance.

Ordinance 409, enacted Dec. 4, penalizes begging and giving alms.

Unless the beggar is an infant or a child below nine years old, he or she could be fined P500 or imprisoned for a year, or both, at the discretion of the court. Those who give alms could be fined P500 or render community service. If children are found begging, they could be committed to their parents' care, to the government, or a private childcare agency.

Also passed was Ordinance 410 creating the Iloilo City Anti-Mendicancy Board to pass measures against drunkards, beggars and vagrants. The mayor chairs the board with members of the city council, police and the Commission on Human Rights and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and other agencies.

Some groups criticized the ordinances for being anti-poor and prone to human rights abuse. The NCIP said it would review the ordinances.

NCIP's regional director Alfonso Catolin said that there should be a study on the plight of Badjaos to determine if they are part of a syndicate, itinerant beggars or were displaced by war between the government and the Abu Sayyaf.

While the debate went on, a group of Protestant churches decided to help the Badjaos. On Dec. 30, the Salvation Army, Creative Community Foundation and Christ-Centered Church gave the Badjaos Christmas meal and cans of sardines, kilos of rice and packs of instant noodles. The children were given biscuits, candies and apples.

The gathering ended with women and children dancing to Badjao songs and beat of drums, in a display of culture that many Ilonggos failed to see on those begging on the streets.

2 Indians die as boat sinks

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Two Indian tourists were killed on New Year's Day when the boat they were riding in capsized off Sipalay City, Negros Occidental.

The fatalities were identified as Suinder Singh, 30, of Bacolod City, Negros Occidental and Harmes Singh, 44, of Quezon City, according to Coast Guard reports.

The two were among eight passengers of motorboat Libra on their way to Bermuda Beach Resort in Sipalay when the boat's engine failed.

The boat capsized at about 1:15 p.m. 3 kilometers off the shores of Barangay Nauhang, Sipalay City, 180 kilometers south of Bacolod, after it was battered by big waves, according to the Coast Guard.

Residents of nearby villages and Coast Guard personnel launched rescue efforts, saving six of the passengers.

The two foreigners died before reaching the Sipalay Health Center where they were brought by rescuers.

Flavier seeks probe of Baguio flyover project

BAGUIO CITY—Sen. Juan Flavier has asked environment officials to investigate the issuance of a "wrong" environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to an P89-million Baguio road project.

Local environmentalists had blocked the project in 2000 "for its high ecological costs."

The 296-meter long flyover project is using an ECC that was designed for a 178-meter-long flyover, a Department of Public Works and Highways official admitted in December.

"The DPWH Cordillera office submitted the original design (to the Environmental Management Bureau) when we processed the project, but the designers in (the DPWH central office) altered the design to increase the span of the road and to widen it," the official said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources was not also advised that the project design would require the DPWH to destroy a nature park in front of the century-old Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center (BGHMC).

"I do not subscribe to legislators starting an investigation myself. But I know that (the Baguio flyover mess) is a very serious matter," Flavier, a Baguio-raised doctor and the BGHMC's biggest benefactor, told the INQUIRER by telephone on Monday.

He said he was advised about the supposed anomaly by Virginia de Guia, a former Baguio mayor and member of a group of Baguio old-timers called Team Baguio. "They sent me hefty documents regarding the project, which I immediately transmitted to Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun," he said.

Flavier was also given copies of a petition signed by some 200 people living or working near Marcos Highway that opposed the Baguio flyover project.

Peter Puzon, a Baguio resident, said he collected the signatures to persuade the city council to withdraw a "midnight resolution" approving the flyover.

De Guia said the flyover project merely converted a proposed underpass that was opposed in 2000 for threatening the district's water sources.

Both projects, said Dario Domingo, DPWH Cordillera assistant director, are supposed to address a traffic problem expected in the next five years.

Like the original vehicular underpass plan, the proposed flyover will use P43 million in savings from the Philippine-Japan Friendship Highway loan, which financed the Marcos Highway modernization program.

"If this involves a loan, why not just return the savings so we will pay back less money?" De Guia asked.

"There are better ways of handling traffic. Decongest downtown Baguio. Develop a new area so people will go there. Do something that will divert them away from downtown Baguio so we can help develop other parts of the city." *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Greenhills Appliance-Furniture Exhibit Extended to Jan. 19, 2003!

HERE'S good news to all Greenhills patrons! Due to numerous customer requests, the Automatic Centre-Blims Furniture exhibit is extended. Situated in Automatic Centre's original location in San Juan at the former Manila Bank Arcade of the Greenhills Shopping Center.

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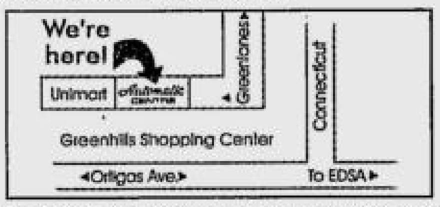

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Meanwhile, here's the list of Daily Giveaway raffle winners as of Dec. 24, 2002:

- Dec. 24 -**Dennis Bernardino** Panasonic 14" Color TV TC-14LMC
- Dec. 23-**Anne Elizabeth Cablay** Carrier Window-Type Aircon FCA-055BP
- Dec. 22-**Rita Alvero** White-Westinghouse Ref WR-1799C
- Dec. 21-**Haydee Lisa Eugenio** National Wash. Mach. NA-S50R4
- Dec. 20-**Waldo Regondola** La Germania Compact Range T-120WT
- Dec. 19-**Vivian R. Lautchang** Whirlpool Microwave Oven AVM-512
- Dec. 18-**MariJane T. Otasiro** Sharp Portable Component WF-1100W
- Dec. 17 -**Dominador L. Sawan** Sony 14"Color TV KV-14JSR1
- Dec. 16-**Ma. Annabelle Sevilla** Sanyo Personal Ref SR-8K
- Dec. 15-**E.C. Palma** White-Westinghouse Wash. Mach. WW-669
- Dec. 14-**Imee M. Lequin** National Wash. Mach. NA-S50R4
- Dec. 13-**Steve Chan** La Germania Compact Range T-120WT
- Dec. 12-**Elizabeth Serrano** Sharp Karaoke HK-Z190
- Dec. 11-**Allan Noel Delgado** Sharp Portable Component WF-1100W
- Dec. 10-**Estela Marie L. Pineda** Panasonic 14"Color TV TC-14LMC
- Dec. 9-**Rommel Dollison** Carrier Window-Type Aircon FCA-055BP
- Dec. 8-**Ronilo Geronimo** Condura Ref CPS-5SD
- Dec. 7-**Willie S. Mercado** National Wash. Mach. NA-S50R4
- Dec. 6-**Rolando A. Velasco** Whirlpool Microwave Oven AVM-512
- Dec. 5-**Ma. Lourdes Juarez** Sharp Karaoke HK-Z190
- Dec. 4-**Robert C. Paloma** Sharp Portable Component WF-1100W
- Dec.3-**Ileana S.Mendenilla** White-Westinghouse Ref WR-1799C
- Dec. 2-**Cherry Ciego** White-Westinghouse Wash. Mach. WW-669
- Dec. 1-**Nerissa Obrero** National Washing Machine NA-S50R4
- Nov. 30-**Raider L. Retolin, Jr.** La Germania Compact Range T-120WT
- Nov. 29-**Zaila C. Decin** Whirlpool Microwave Oven AVM-512
- Nov. 28-**Jason R. Co** Sharp Karaoke HK-Z190
- Nov. 27-**Perfecto P. Arribas** Sharp Portable Component WF-1100W
- Nov. 26-**Linda C. Feliciano** Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner Z1020C
- Nov. 25 -**Felizardo Gutierrez** Condura Refrigerator CPS-5SD
- Nov. 24-**Filomena Salvador** Sanyo Personal Ref SR-8K
- Nov. 23-**Delia Eugenio** National Wash. Mach. NA-S50R4
- Nov. 22-**Ester N. Hukom** Whirlpool Microwave Oven AVM-512
- Nov. 21-**Randy Arellano** Sharp Karaoke HK-Z190
- Nov. 20-**Lanie B. Batiola** Sharp Portable Component WF-1100W
- Nov. 19-**Divine Sanders** Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner Z1020C
- Nov. 18-**Jane S. Caras** Condura Refrigerator CPS-5SD
- Nov. 17-**Burton T. Sy** La Germania Compact Range T-120WT
- Nov. 16-**Lynne L. Manlapaz** Sharp Karaoke HK-Z190

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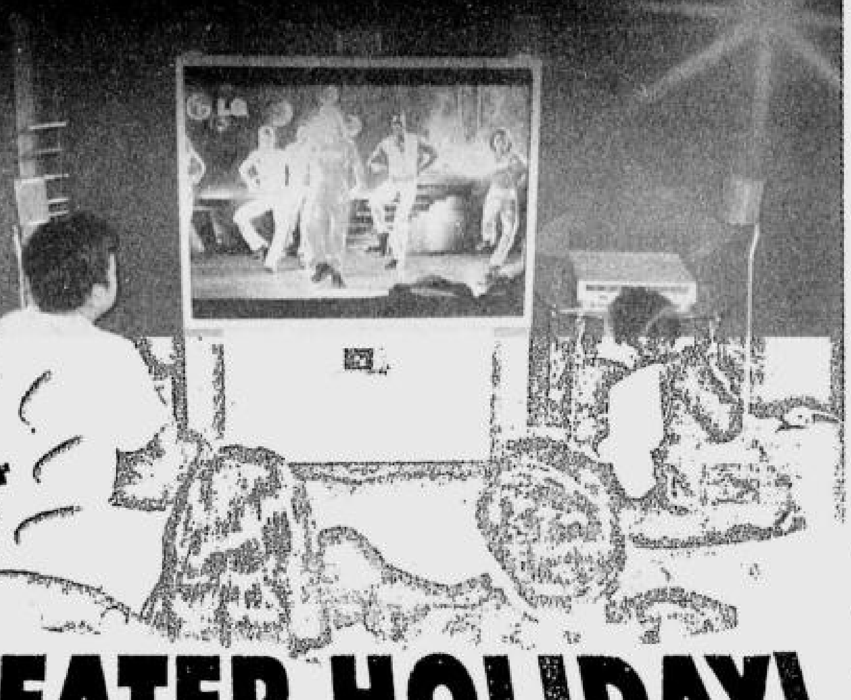

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INQUIRER Visayas
Editor Jun Bandayrel ◎ Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

A stressful year for the Visayas

TO SAY that 2002 was a stressful year for the Visayas is an understatement. The economic uncertainty, felt all over the country, was compounded by high profile crimes and scandals and peace and order and environmental woes.

There was a marked rise in rebel-initiated clashes, ambushes and burning of property, including in "relatively peaceful" areas like Cebu. Between March to December, 22 soldiers and policemen were killed and 10 others were wounded in ambushes and encounters in Samar, Leyte, Negros Oriental and Cebu provinces. These occurred amid charges of human rights violations committed by soldiers against peasant and militant groups on Negros and Cebu islands.

Land reform beneficiaries took matters into their own hands and took over disputed lands in Negros Occidental.

Centuries-old trees in whatever was left of the Negros forest were felled and cut into lumber. Local officials stand accused of the crime.

The shocking scandal involving sexual abuses of Catholic priests in the United States also shook the Cebu Church hierarchy, when victims of three priests came out to claim they were molested when they were boys serving the Church.

There were the high profile crimes. Topping the list is the flight, arre on Dinagat Island, Surigao del rte and subsequent detention at the Cebu City jail of cult leader Ruben Ecleo Jr., who stands accused of murdering his wife, Alona Bacolod-Ecleo, in January 2002.

On its heels is the still unresolved massacre of the parents and two siblings of Alona Bacolod in Mandaue City at the height of the police siege of the Ecleo enclave on Dinagat Island on June 18; and the Oct. 5 unresolved death of Cherry Augusto, a young woman who in August accused assistant Cebu City prosecutor Mary Ann Castro of having an illicit relationship with her husband Zandro.

But in the face of these headline-grabbing crimes, killings and scandals, Visayans proved resilient. Economic statistics from the three regional groupings in the Visayas showed there is much to hope for in 2003.

Like Negros Occidental Rep. Jules Ledesma and his new wife actress Assunta de Rossi and actress Elizabeth Oropesa and her new husband Joey Valdez, Visayans weathered the storm and are ready to face what 2003 will bring.

THE ARREST of Ruben Ecleo Jr., seen here on arrival at the Villamor Airbase with his mother Rep. Glenda Ecleo and Sen. Robert Barbers, put focus on a cult and its sphere of influence.

DENNIS SABANGAN

YEARENDER

Western Visayas: Alls well that ends well

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
Iloilo City

THE YEAR 2002 started with a bleak forecast of the economy that surprisingly made a better turn toward the end of the year.

Western Visayas' economy hobbled at the start of the year with more than 5,000 workers all over the region losing their jobs in 56 firms that shut down and 109 that laid off men in 2001. Negros Occidental had the most workers—3,922—who lost their jobs in 121 firms.

The year opened with protests against oil price increases and the entry of US troops in the country. These were a salvo for more street marches, transport strikes and demonstrations throughout the rest of the year.

The region's tourism industry took a quick beating when a 24-hour blackout hit the island resort of Boracay in Aklan province in March.

Some 200 tourist establishments were without electricity when the National Power Corporation (Napocor) cut off supply to the Aklan Electric Cooperative for failing to pay P75 million in electric bills.

The crisis ended when the National Electrification Administration took over the cash-strapped cooperative.

Business climate

Despite tourism growth, the region experienced a slowdown in investment. About this time—a bikini car wash, a business tact to shore up a sagging restaurant business—received flak.

Protesters led by militant Gabriela-Panay called it a "cheap gimmick that degrades women."

The women, in string bikinis, sponged cars to earn P400 a day. The city government won't issue a permit to the car wash when the Catholic Church called the business "morally inappropriate."

In August, electric consumers hit the streets, calling for the scrapping of the Power Purchase Adjustment. Protesters found an ally in the Catholic Church led by Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo.

In a pastoral letter, the Jaro Archdiocese said the PPA is "not so easily discernible because it lies hidden in the maze of technical and systematic packaging."

The kidnapping of 13-year-old Jefferson Tan on Oct. 15 sent shivers to the local business community. The boy was released Oct. 23. The aftermath sent the business community organizing meetings on how to prevent kidnapping and deal with "terrorism."

In-fighting and political squabbles added to the region's economic woes, especially in Antique when Gov. Sally Zaldivar-Perez was locked in a power struggle with mayors who allied themselves with the province's congressman, Rep. Exequiel Javier.

Also in October, the government and the Revolutionary Proletarian Army—Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) met in Iloilo city and adopted the general rules and procedures in the implementation of the peace pact they signed in December 2000.

Part of the meeting's agenda was the P510 million development and reintegration package for the RPA-ABB members represented by Veronica Tabara and Stephen Paduano, also known as Carapali Lualhati.

Military pullout

In the human rights front, the indigenous Tumandok, also called Sulodnon by scholars, demanded the pullout of Army soldiers in their communities.

Human rights advocates said the Tumandoks suffered from human rights abuses in the hands of soldiers and their men were forced to join the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu).

Among the prominent Tumandok to make the appeal was 102-year-old Elena Garduce, a healer and chanter of indigenous epic who took a six-hour journey to speak before human rights advocates and reporters in Iloilo City.

Stable prices

The year 2002 closed with a better note for Western Visayas—prices of basic commodities were stable despite oil price increases in the third quarter of the year.

The steady supply of rice and other crops brought down prices of food and basic commodities, statistics from the National Economic Development Authority (Neda) regional office showed.

Rice production in the region fell slightly but that of corn and coconut increased. Like rice, corn and sugar cane harvest also fell but it was better compared to the same period in 2001.

Rough seas in the third quarter of the year caused commercial fishery to decline but yield of bangus was good.

In Iloilo, the strict implementation of fishery laws led to the filing of 130 cases in court. By protecting the coastal waters, communities noticed that their fishing ground had started teeming with fish anew.

The third quarter also saw P2.8 billion generated from new businesses, 74 percent higher than in the previous quarter. A total of 1,433 firms registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for the period.

The economy for the third quarter continued until the last quarter of the year when Christmas brought high demand for goods and services.

Central Visayas: Mixed results

By Irene R. Sino-Cruz
Cebu City

THE YEAR 2002 gave mixed results for various sectors in Cebu and the rest of Central Visayas.

Exports posted a slight growth amid the global economic slowdown following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

The Mactan Economic Zone (MEZ) reported a slight increase in exports from January to August 2002 although exports were expected to decline after 9/11.

MEZ acting chief Remedios L. Llamzon said the MEZ felt the effects of the US economic slump that followed Sept. 11 until the end of the second quarter this year.

"However, towards the third quarter, business had bounced back but not quite like the figure we had in the year 2000," Llamzon said.

But job loss hounded the export zone. From 41,000 workers in August 2001, the zone ended up hosting 38,744 in August 2002.

Exports for the first eight months of 2002 reached over $1 billion, according to a report of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) office in Mactan.

This figure was up by over 3 percent over exports of $973.1 million in the same period last year.

Increased exports

During the first three quarters of 2002, Central Visayas exports posted an increase compared to exports in the same period in 2001.

In a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) report, exports from Central Visayas grew by 12.13 percent, from $1.224 billion in the first six months of 2001 to $1.372 billion in the same period last year.

However, sectors such as electrical equipment, vehicles and machinery parts, furniture, gifts, toys and housewares (GTH), ceramics and garments posted a decline in exports.

Exports of GTH fell by as much as 56 percent.

But electronics exports generated a 2.4 percent increase, from $579.91 million in the first six months of 2002 to $593.8 million in the same period this year.

In the first semester of 2002, semiconductor exports increased by 1,739 percent.

Based on data gathered by the DTI regional office, semiconductor exports rose from only $7.473 million in the first six months of 2001 to $137.5 million in the same period in 2002.

The DTI said increased demand in the United States contributed to this leap.

Export of watches grew by 259.9 percent, from only $11.8 million last year to $42.8 million this year.

Exports of computer magnetic discs and diskettes also increased by 23.22 percent.

The DTI regional office, in its report, said that Central Visayas exports grew by 5 percent, from $2 billion in the third quarter of 2001 to $2.09 billion in the same period last year.

Electronics remained the region's top export product—57.46 percent of the total export.

Furniture came in second, accounting for 10.2 percent of total exports while electrical equipment contributed 5.32 percent.

These three sectors have consistently been in the top five export sectors in the last five years, according to DTI.

Top export market

The US remained the top export market, receiving 20.85 percent of the region's exports in the third quarter of 2002.

Japan was second with 16.88 percent and Hong Kong third with 8.86 percent.

Tourism started to recover in October 2002 when the Japanese started coming back.

Japan has been the region's top tourist market for several years but the Japanese government issued a travel advisory raising a level two alert for the whole country, including Cebu.

The arrival of Koreans also helped boost the region's tourism industry.

During the first 10 months of 2002, Korean arrivals grew by 118.24 percent, from only 23,782 in the same period last year to almost 52,000 this year.

"Compared with other regions, we're doing better. Because of our direct international flights, we have the edge over other regions," said Department of Tourism (DOT) regional director Patria Aurora Roa.

Rosa said Cebu is an established international destination and is perceived to be a better one by travelers.

Eastern Visayas: Bright prospects ahead

By Vicente S. Labro
Tacloban City

THE YEAR 2002 was not a rosy one for Eastern Visayas, but it was not a bad one either. The region had its usual problems—poverty, irregularities in government, environmental degradation, rising criminality and insurgency.

Government agencies and non-government organizations, however, are trying to solve all these problems.

As the year ended people saw bright prospects in the rising price of copra, the region's potential as an eco-tourism destination, and the continuing success of the region's small and medium enterprises.

Hogging the headlines in the past year, however, were politics, a sea disaster that brought the President to a small island town, and clashes between the military and the NPA.

Complaints against mining operations on two islands of Eastern Samar, the efforts to establish the Samar Island Natural Park, damages that hit the famous San Juanico Bridge while undergoing a P700-million repair, and the controversy over the Olot property of the Romualdezes also made news.

The wedding of La Oropesa with a local guy also caught the people's attention. Actress Elizabeth Oropesa, 48, wed Joey Valdez, 25, a medical therapist and gym instructor, in his hometown of Taft, Eastern Samar on Nov. 8. Some 1,000 people attended the wedding at the Gagala Beach Resort in Taft.

New congressman

The unseating of Rep. Victoria L. Locsin of the fourth district of Leyte was the biggest news in the region this year.

The Supreme Court, in an en banc 51-page decision, ruled that the proclamation of Locsin was null and void, paving the way for former Ormoc City Mayor Eufrocino Codilla Sr. to assume her post.

Codilla won by more than 17,000 votes over Locsin, but the Commission on Elections representative in Leyte instead proclaimed Locsin.

Codilla was then facing a disqualification case, which was not yet finally decided at that time. A case was filed before the Comelec and this reached the high tribunal.

The High Court en banc had also decided on another disqualification case in the region.

In October, the SC decided that Filipino-American Mayor Teodulo Coquilla of Oras, Eastern Samar was disqualified to seek an elective post because he failed to meet the one-year residency requirement. Coqilla's vice mayor, Virgilio Montances, assumed the position on Nov. 8.

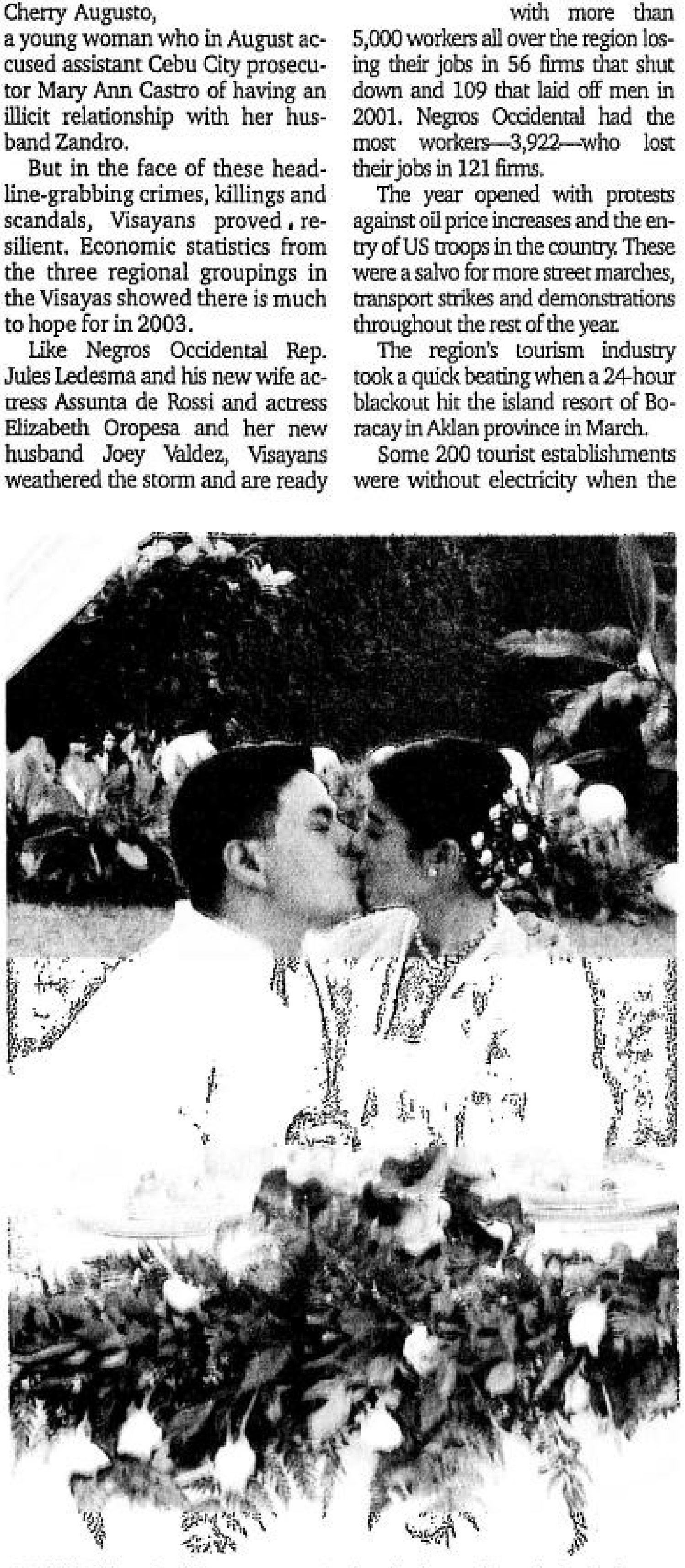
Bench Warrant

The city of Tacloban almost had a jailed mayor early this year when the Sandiganbayan issued a bench warrant against City Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez.

When the warrant was served, Romualdez, who was then on sick leave, was in a Manila hospital undergoing treatment. His lawyers were able to post his bail, saving him from incarceration. The mayor is facing several charges at the anti-graft court.

The mayor's sister, former Leyte Rep. Imelda Romualdez Marcos, almost got back the family's sequestered property in Barangay Olot, Tolosa, Leyte when the Sandiganbayan ruled to have it returned to the former first lady.

But Imelda's euphoria over this "paradise regained" was short-lived because on Dec. 4, the Supreme Court stopped the Sandiganbayan from implementing its order.



SHOWBIZ and politics marry and take the form of Rep. Jules Ledesma and actress Assunta de Rossi, photographed sealing their marriage vows with a kiss.

FILE PHOTO

GMA, JDV split on unity government

From page A1

gal discussed the idea with members of her Cabinet yesterday.

She assigned members of the Cabinet oversight committee on internal security, particularly Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman, to thresh out the details of the unity government.

Bunye said the "general sentiment (in the Cabinet) was that the government of national unity be program-oriented."

He said the President did not necessarily have to accommodate new faces in her Cabinet as a result of the formation of a unity government.

Asked about the possibility of a Cabinet revamp, Bunye said, "It does not follow."

In an interview after the meeting, Interior Secretary Jose Lina said he had no problem with the idea of a unity government, but he said he wanted to see the details.

"In principle there's nothing wrong with the idea. That's always an ideal, but the details have to be worked out," he said.

Too good to ignore

For those invited by De Venecia, the offer to be part of a "unity government" was too good to ignore.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, president of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, said he was willing to help Ms Macapagal unite the nation by forging a common development agenda with all political parties.

Cojuangco has committed the Nationalist People's Coalition to the proposed "unity government" being put together by De Venecia.

But he won't accept an appointment as a member of the Cabinet or as presidential adviser, according to Tarlac Rep. Gilbert Teodoro Jr., Cojuangco's nephew.

Teodoro, head of the 63-member NPC contingent in the House, confirmed that De Venecia had asked him and Cojuangco if they were interested in joining the Cabinet.

Teodoro said he would not take any appointive position. He is qualified for another House term but is being touted as a possible senatorial candidate of the NPC.

He said he knew how difficult it was to be in the executive, citing the more than 20 years that his father, Gilbert Sr. had spent as administrator of the Social Service Insurance System.

As for his uncle, "he won't accept any position in government," not even as a presidential adviser, Teodoro said.

But he said his uncle, NPC chair emeritus and chair and CEO of San Miguel Corp., would agree to the appointment of other NPC members to the Cabinet.

He said the party did not want to haggle for a Cabinet post. "We will be very happy if he will appoint an NPC to the Cabinet but we feel that this should be her prerogative," he said.

"We will be very supportive of a government of national unity," Teodoro said, pointing out that after all the NPC is part of the coalition in the House and is the second biggest party after the ruling Lakas-CMD. (Lakas-NUCD has been renamed Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats).

The NPC has no senator but has 22 governors and 10 city mayors, aside from 63 congressmen.

As for the biggest opposition party, the LDP said a framework for genuine multi-party cooperation should include at least three "basic and non-controversial issues," namely better education, improved health services and intensified program for the production of affordable food.

"We should immediately agree on a specific agenda and the agenda should focus on the most basic of our concerns," said Angara, LDP head.

He said that education, while getting a nominal budgetary increase every year, allocates 85 percent to 90 percent of its funds for personnel and operating services, leaving barely 10 to 15 percent of its yearly budget for capital expenditures.

Angara pointed out that the per capita investment in education, which stood at P403.10, was the lowest in eight years.

He said that the education sector needed a one-time investment of P15 billion just to meet the classroom shortage and another P15 billion for a school modernization and innovation fund.

Around 8.5 million children of school age suffer from various stages of malnutrition, stunting the country's most precious resource, he said.

Angara noted that the allocation for health services had been falling in real terms and that a crash program supported by all parties could make this a national priority. The current per capita expenditure of P43.5 for health is also the lowest in eight years.

Despite a bigger budget for agriculture and fisheries modernization, the budget of the agriculture sub-sector for 2003 is down by P1.6 billion compared with the 2002 budget because of the reduction in the regular allocation of the Department of Agriculture and in the funding for irrigation programs, according to Angara.

Hard decisions

Opposition Sen. Rodolfo Biazon urged Ms Macapagal to deal with issues that "need hard decisions."

Biazon mentioned the Asean Free Trade Agreement and the RP-China free trade agreement.

"She would have to make the big decisions on the differing demands of the different sectors when these agreements are implemented," he said.

He said the adoption of these agreements would open the floodgates for imported rice, chicken, meat and vegetables "that would surely hurt our local producers and manufacturers."

"That is the time when the President would have to institute the needed programs no matter how unpopular they are to shield our local industries," he said.

Another "hard decision" that the President must make deals with the government population policy, which has been heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, according to Senate president Pro Tempore Juan Flavier.

"She must make the hard decisions now because she does not have to worry about the pressures anymore," he said.

Vice President Teofisto Guingona also lauded the plan to form a Cabinet of national unity but warned that political concessions may adversely affect the pursuit of good governance, the creation of more jobs and the holding of honest elections in 2004.

Guingona nevertheless expressed confidence that his own proposals to improve the economy would now be given more attention.

He reminded the President of the programs she had promised to support when he stepped down as secretary of foreign affairs.

These include programs for securing social, medical and legal benefits for overseas Filipino workers through the Overseas Filipino Investment Bonds, promoting seafarer's welfare, establishing a steel industry in Mindanao, and a housing program that would provide shelter and spur other industries.

"These are vital programs which I believe are crucial and can better be attained under a climate of national unity on a nonpartisan basis," Guingona said in his letter to the President. *With reports from Norman Bordadora and Rocky Nazareno*

House arrest for Erap, bail for Jinggoy

By Christine O. Avendano

IN THE spirit of national healing, the government was urged yesterday by an administration lawmaker to support efforts to have deposed President Joseph Estrada placed under house arrest as well as step up bail proceedings for ex-San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada and lawyer Antonio Serapio.

According to Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles, these were "two major steps towards national healing, especially in so far as bridging the prevailing animosity between the administration and opposition."

In a statement, Nograles also said the twin moves would be "gestures of goodwill which can be reciprocated with sincere cooperation."

He said that the plunder case of Estrada before the Sandiganbayan remains to be "one of the contentious issues that is dividing the nation and one of the reasons why forces allied with Estrada are still restless and hesitant in rallying behind the Macapagal government."

But Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said the pursuit of national healing doesn't mean the government should give up its pursuit of the plunder case against Estrada or coming up with "gestures of conciliation" or "political concessions" like house arrest for the deposed President.

"The government should ensure that the basis for the popular movement to oust Estrada should be pursued," Ocampo said in a phone interview.

Joma turns down offer; MILF likes idea but...

From page A1

ing. But her government should formalize its offer to (MILF) chair Salamat Hashim," Eid Kabalu, spokesperosn of the Moro rebel group, said.

Kabalu said the MILF was willing to work with the government "to attain development and peace especially in Mindanao."

"If ever the formal invitation reaches us, then it would be studied by our Central Committee. We would like to know whether our participation in the unity government would definitely provide a lasting solution to the problems besetting the Bangsamoro and the native inhabitants of Mindanao," he said.

The formal invitation can help the rebel group determine if there is indeed a need for Hashim to sit in the unity government or for him to just send a representative, according to Kabalu.

Warning

A senator warned against inviting rebel groups to the Cabinet.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said including the CPP-NDF and MILF in the Cabinet should be "made within the bounds of the Constitution and other laws."

"We cannot have those who have run against our laws to be in the Cabinet," said Biazon, a former Armed Forces chief of staff.

He added in jest: "Who knows before we know it we might even have (representatives) Abu Sayyaf in the Cabinet."

In rejecting De Venecia's offer, Sison said the remaining 18 months of Ms Macapagal's term "will not be enough for uniting the competing parties of the pro-US exploiting classes of big *compradors* and landlords."

"As far as I know, the revolutionary forces allied within the National Democratic Front do not find any basis for joining a government under the current presidency," said Sison, chief political consultant of the NDF.

But these forces "welcome the face value of (Ms) Macapagal's announcement of her desire to concentrate on the social and economic problems and to seek national unity," he said. "They see a glimmer of hope that she is now more inclined than before to engage in peace negotiations with the NDF."

Abandon terrorist tag

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo also welcomed moves to form a unity government but he said the government would have to abandon its support for the United States' designation of the Communist Party of the Philippines along with its armed wing, the New People's Army, as a terrorist group.

"How can you invite an organization to join a unity government if you don't regard it well?" said Ocampo, who once served as NDF spokesperson. The government, he said, must make a "clear cut policy" on this.

Resume peace talks

In his statement, Sison said that "for the time being" the NDF hoped to see the President "demonstrate by deeds more resolve to resume the peace negotiations ... and without placing the NDF negotiators, consultants, staffers and supporters under duress of being designated as 'terrorists' by the US and other imperialist powers."

Also, he said, the government may use the peace negotiations to fully explain the concept of a "unity government" to the NDF as reportedly broached earlier by De Venecia to Romeo Capulong, former NDF lawyer and now a UN judge.

Sison said he welcomed suggestions that De Venecia, Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda, government negotiating panel chair Silvestre Bello III and Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza "visit us in The Netherlands in order to iron out kinks and pave the way for the formal talks . . . in Oslo, Norway."

It is "urgent" that the two sides tackle social and economic problems and forge a comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms "within the next six months," he said.

"Thereafter, it becomes possible to negotiate political and constitutional reforms," he said.

Gimmickry

For his part, Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, CPP spokesperson, dismissed the proposed "unity government" as "nonsense loose talks and plain gimmickry" of the administration.

"The government wants to bait the opposition into silence by offering a power-sharing scheme. To give the semblance of sincerity, it wants the revolutionary movement to join the charade," Rosal told the INQUIRER in a cellular phone interview.

Rosal said the revolutionary movement would not be enticed into joining the scheme. "Why would we, when nothing was ever mentioned in the report how the proposed unity government would address the basic roots of the problems confronting the Filipino people?" he asked. *With a report from Volt Contreras in Manila*

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SPORTS

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Editor **Al S. Mendoza** ◎ *Assistant Editor* **Edwin M. Villanueva**

Bryant, Carter top All-Star balloting

NEW YORK—Kobe Bryant and Vince Carter are the top vote-getters in fan balloting for the NBA All-Star game, with Yao Ming in fourth place. After two rounds of voting, the league on Thursday listed Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers with 958,695 votes. *AP*

'PBA DRAFT ON MY MIND'

I must be true to my word—Villanueva

ENRICO Villanueva denied yesterday he was being tapped to play for Dazz Dishwashing Paste in a PBL game today in Lipa City.

``I have already said it before and I must say it again now," said Villanueva. ``I'm not playing anymore for any amateur basketball team as I have already shifted my focus on joining the PBA."

The 6-foot-5 Villanueva, the MVP of the recent UAAP wars for helping power Ateneo to the UAAP crown against La Salle, planed in yesterday from the United States.

In a talk to the INQUIRER, Villanueva said he was sticking to his earlier decision to concentrate on the pro ranks.

``Before I left for the US, I wrote Mr. Cecilio de Pedro about my desire to put all my attention to the PBA," said Villanueva. ``I had done so in writing when I politely declined his offer to play for his team Dazz several months ago. I must be true to my word."

Villanueva said his immediate priority now is to train for the pre-PBA Draft camp on Jan. 10 at the SM Megamall.

``I want to be totally ready for the camp," he said. ``I don't want my mind to be distracted. When I was in the US, I poured everything towards my goal of joining the PBA Draft this year."

Villanueva is among the Top 3 in the PBA Draft on Jan. 12 at the Glorietta in Makati City.

His main rivals for the top spot are Romel Adducul and Mike Cortez.

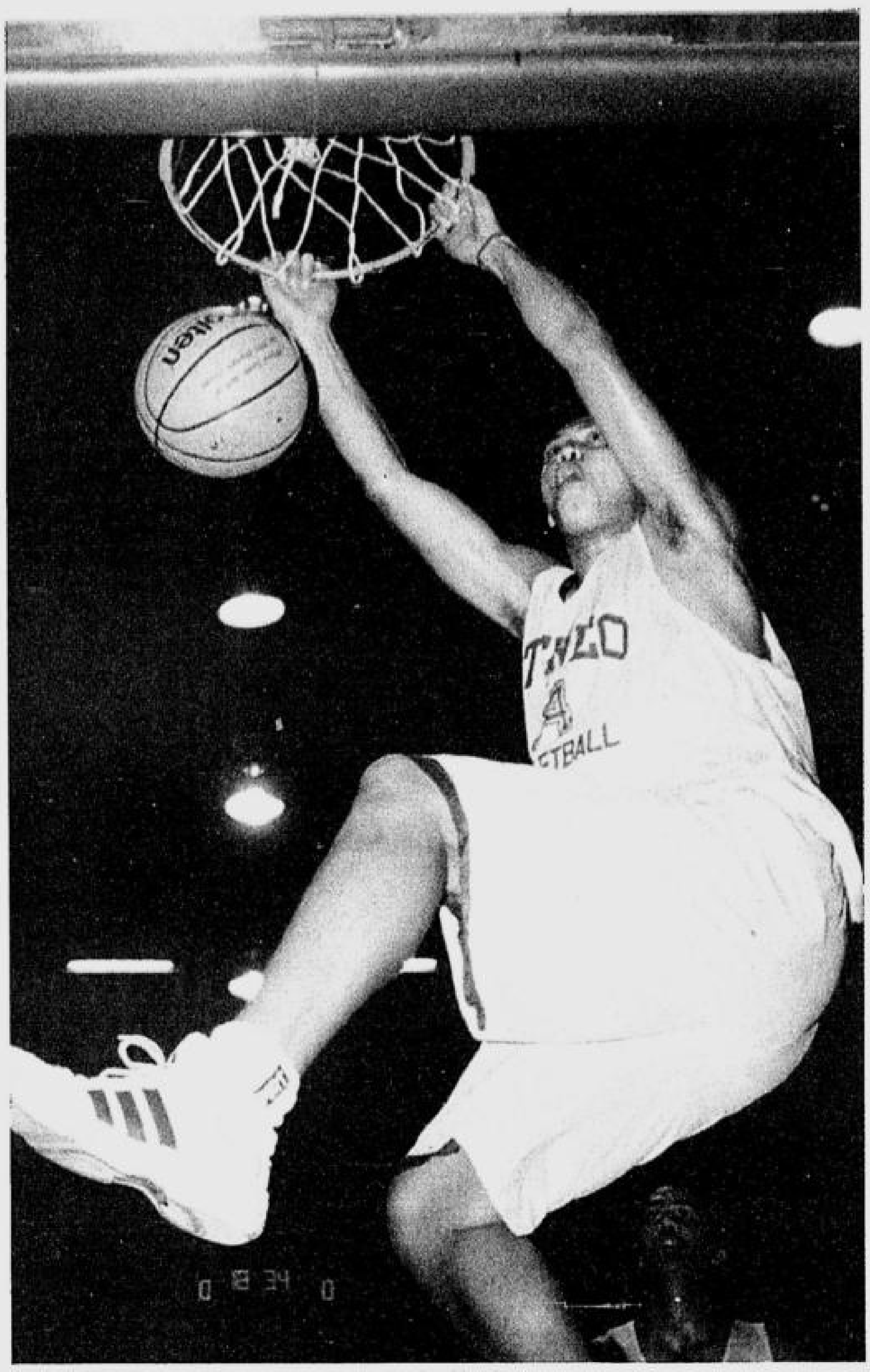
Cortez was reportedly Tim Cone's choice when Alaska gets the first crack at the pool. A source said Cone likes the playing style of Cortez, a 6-foot-flat deadshot of a pointguard during his La Salle days. Cortez is being touted as the next Johnny Abarrientos of the PBA.

It will be recalled that it was under Cone's wings that Abarrientos' full potential blossomed.

But Alaska owner Freddie Uytengsu has told a PBA insider he preferred either the 6-foot-6 Adducul or Villanueva.

Uytengsu was reportedly dissatisfied with the performance of Alaska's tall players during the recent Coke-Alaska playoffs that saw Coke win the crown, 3-1.

Ginebra, which will pick second after Alaska, will settle for either Adducul or Cortez, with Villanueva most likely going to Shell. *Al S. Mendoza*



VILLANUEVA shows his awesome power in this file photo.

Raging Andrada, Mamawal row ends with polls today

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE RAGING showdown for the tennis association presidency comes to a fitting finale today when 11 regional representatives and seven appointed officials cast their vote at 10 a.m. at the Manila Midtown Hotel.

The main protagonists are retired Col. Buddy Andrada, who is seeking a fifth term that would make him Philta chief up to 2006, and Jovy Mamawal, a long-time age-group guru who is promising to steer Philippine tennis to new heights by focusing on grassroots development.

Off-hand, Andrada enjoys a big advantage because of his seven allies as members of the executive board; they will vote along with 11 regional vice presidents elected early in 2002.

Mamawal said he's a long shot to win it, citing the fact that Andrada has influence over regional vice presidents.

``I want everybody to know that in tennis, as in life, nobody's indispensable," said Mamawal, founder of the Children Tennis Workshop that has produced the country's top players like Johnny Arcilla and Adelo Abadia. ``I don't care if I lose this one, at least I offered something which I hope would improve the present plight of Philippine tennis."

Andrada said he was not closing the door on a possible alliance with Mamawal.

``I will extend the hand of unity to anybody who has a sincere dedication to serve Philippine tennis," said Andrada.

ANDRADA

Andrada, who assumed his post in 1988, said he will not waste time and energy answering back at his detractors.

He said that working together with Mamawal ``will help the country's drive to regain supremacy in Southeast Asia, if not in Asia itself."

Andrada said the culprit for the fall of Philippine tennis has been the lack of sponsors ``stemming from the country's poor economy."

Mamawal, whose age-group program has practically covered the entire breath of the Philippine archipelago, said ``that problem can be remedied through a concerted effort to search for talents in the countryside."

Andrada and Mamawal have been trading brickbats for almost a year now and pundits said today's election could lead to a truce.

The Philippines had no tennis entry in the recent Busan Asian Games because Andrada refused to accept the Philippine Olympic Committee's decision to send in only one participant.

Andrada justified his decision by saying sending just one player would only be a waste of money, a position that was unanimously supported by the Philta board.

Dazz Dishwashing, Montaña battle separate rivals

GAMES TODAY
(Lipa Sports Cultural Center)
2 p.m.—Montaña vs Sunkist-Pampanga
4 p.m.—Dazz vs LBC-Batangas

STANDINGS	W	L
Group A		
Welcoat	8	1
Blu	7	3
Dazz	5	4
LBC-Batangas	5	5
Group B		
ICTSI	6	4
Montaña	5	5
John-O	4	6
CheeseBalls-Shark	2	8
Sunkist	2	8

DAZZ Dishwashing Paste and Montaña Jewels aim to bolster their bids into the next round as they battle separate rivals today when the PBL Challenge Cup resumes at the Lipa Sports Cultural Center in Batangas.

The Greasebusters, setting their eyes on the No. 2 spot, expect a tough down-the-wire battle against LBC-Batangas at 4 p.m.

The Jewelers, on the other hand, must win over Sunkist Pampanga in the 2 p.m. curtain raiser to keep their hope for a wildcard entry alive.

If it succeeds in getting the No. 2 spot, Dazz will gain the twice-to-beat incentive in the crossover semifinals. But to achieve this, the Greasebusters must prevail over the Batangas Blades and win their last elimination outing against Welcoat on Jan. 11.

Former MBA MVP John Ferriols will be making his debut with Dazz as coach Junel Baculi expects his experience will be a big boost in avenging their 53-56 setback to the Batangas Blades last Dec. 5, together with Allan Salangsang, Eugene Tan, Cyrus Baguio, Nine Gelig and Peter June Simon.

Gambill upsets Federer

DOHA, Qatar—Top-seeded Roger Federer became the third major seed to fall by the wayside when he was upset in the quarterfinals of the ATP one-million-dollar Qatar Open here on Thursday.

The world number six from Switzerland was beaten 6-4, 7-5 by Jan Michael Gambill, the former top 20 American who slipped down the rankings into the forties last year after repeated problems with a shin.

Now however it was a resurgent Gambill who came out hitting the ball at tremendous pace with his unusual double-handed style on both wings, and it took a while before Federer could respond.

An early break was well consolidated by Gambill and proved enough to earn him the first set, and his one tough moment in the second set was when he was required to recover from love-40 in the fourth game. *AFP*

Serena rips Kim in Hopman Cup

PERTH, Australia—Serena Williams sounded a deafening klaxon warning just nine days before the Australian Open on Friday when she pounded Kim Clijsters into submission at the Hopman Cup mixed team event.

While in-form Clijsters has been practising hard in Australia for the past month, world number one Williams only arrived Down Under at the beginning of the week yet she dubbed Clijsters 7-5, 6-3 to edge the top-seeded US towards the final.

The victory-sweet revenge for her loss to world number four Clijsters in the season-ending WTA Championships last November–sends a worrying message to the rest of the Australian Open field.

Holder of the French Open, Wimbledon and US Open crowns, Williams needs the Australian crown to complete what she is already calling a "Serena slam." *Reuters*

Hewitt, Molik win

PERTH, Australia—Australia's Lleyton Hewitt and Alicia Molik beat the Czech Republic's Jiri Novak and Daja Bedanova in a crucial tie here Thursday to qualify for Saturday's final of the $540,000 Hopman Cup.

The second-seeded Australians clinched a thrilling victory when they won the mixed doubles after the singles rubbers had been shared before a sellout crowd 8,405 at Burswood Dome.

In the doubles, Hewitt and Molik won 4-6, 7-5, 10-4 (in a Super Tiebreaker) over almost two hours.

The Czechs missed a great chance in the second set when they squandered three match points when they were leading 5-4. *AFP*

De Guzman downs De Dios, makes semis

TOP seed Irwin de Guzman of La Salle-Greenhills marched in to the boys' 18-under semifinals after posting a 6-1, 7-5 victory over Nico Riego De Dios yesterday in the 14th Andrada Cup age-group tennis tournament at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

De Guzman will face San Beda's Nestor Celestino Jr. who scored a 6-1, 6-1 win over Ken Fernan Agnes.

In the other match, Olongapo City's Patrick John Tierro defeated Davao City's Ed Angelo Diez, 6-3, 6-3.

In the boys 16-under division, top seed Arithmetico Lim of Chiang Kai Shek outplayed Kenrick Bugarin, 6-2, 6-0, and second pick Nestor Celestino Jr. downed Russell Arcilla Jr., 6-3, 6-1, to reach the quarterfinals of this event sponsored by Thaddeus Sporting Goods and Wilson balls.

Other winners were James Murrell, Raymond Villarete, Christian Canlas, Daniel Luis Macalino, Johnwill Baldonado and Ed Angelo Diez.

Booking quarterfinal slots in the boys' 14-under class were Christian Canlas, Russell Arcilla Jr., Daniel Luis Macalino, Johnwill Baldonado, Joshua Tan Ho and Gerard Michael Ngo.

In the boys' 12-under category, Edwin Olivarez downed Kim Ivor Sarasa, 6-4, 6-3; and Raymarc Santiago trounced Bryan Amoranto, 6-1, 6-3, to join Gerard Ngo, Joshua Tan Ho, Patrick Arevalo, Juan Gabriel Pena, Mark Balce and Joseph Baldonado in the quarterfinals.

In the girls division , Tracy Bautista defeated Bien Zoleta, 6-2, 6-2; Michelle Panis beat Ivy de Castro, 6-3, 6-3; and Catherine Flores outclassed Karen Reyes, 6-2, 6-1, to enter the 18-under semifinals.

Gaining semifinals berths in the girls' 14-under division were Bambi Zoleta, Jessica Agra, Nikki Manalo and Julie Em Botor while the semifinalists in the 12-under class were Sarah Jane Lim, Joan Therese Opulencia and Haika Jae Tanpoo and Jia Marell Elesis.

No one writes to the colonel... except me

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I HOPE my wish to see Jovy Mamawal getting embraced as an ally by Col. Buddy Andrada happens after today's election of officers in the Philippine Tennis Association. The good colonel will surely thrash Jovy to win a fifth term as Philta president. It's written in the stars. That'd be another proof of the colonel's unassailable mandate as the country's undisputed tennis czar. The person to topple the colonel has yet to be born. Not Jovy, by golly.

But good winners should treat some losers as allies, too. It would be a pity indeed if, after today's elections, Jovy gets left out in the cold in the name of politicking.

To be sure, bubbly Buddy would not want to see a workhorse like Jovy go to waste. Consider: In nurturing his long-time running age-group tennis program, Jovy has practically devoted his entire life to it. I rarely see Jovy and during the few times of the year that I saw him, he always appeared as though he had just emerged from a tennis court: Hair uncombed, skin of bronze, T-shirt and short pants and sneakers almost looking unkempt. He smelled of sun.

The truth is, Jovy Mamawal is a walking tennis racket. I'll not be surprised if he uses tennis balls as pillows if he finds time to sleep at all. My, my. I have yet to see someone so obsessed with the game.

Does Jovy Mamawal have kids? If he has, I'll not be surprised if they keep a photo of their father in their wallets. Now to Jovy's wife.

Make her a bed sheet, please, with their wedding picture emblazoned on it?

Cold nights for her have become as normal as breathing.

■

Here's wishing both the celebrated painter Danny Dalena and principled journalist Joe Burgos many happy returns of the day. Here's to wine and song for both classmates at UST, who turned 60 today. However, while Dalena will kill the night boozing and dancing, Joe will be in bed recuperating from a heart surgery. Still, cheers to both!

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1993, Teodulfo Nones II beat Ian Pascua in 38 moves of a King's Indian defense to win the Seiko Films' kiddie chess tournament at Metropolitan Chess Club.

Wizards murder Bulls

CHICAGO, Illinois—Jerry Stackhouse had 28 points, but it was Michael Jordan who stole the show as the Washington Wizards downed the Chicago Bulls, 107-82, .on Thursday.

Jordan was the last Washington player introduced before the game and he received a two-minute ovation from the sell-out crowd on hand to see him in his second appearance in a visiting team's uniform at the United Center.

The ovation probably would have gone on longer had the lights not been dimmed to introduce the Bulls, a move greeted by loud boos.

The boos turned to cheers when Jordan made his first shot as he helped the Wizards to the easy win with 10 points, five rebounds and five assists in 30 minutes before leaving the game early in the fourth quarter.

Jordan, 39, led the Bulls to six championships in the 1990s.

He returned with the Wizards for the first time last season and missed another game in Chicago last season due to injury.

The Wizards visit again on January 24 in what will probably be Jordan's last appearance in Chicago, as he has already said he would retire, for the third time, at the end of this season.

Kwame Brown had 20 points and 12 rebounds for Washington, while Tyronn Lue added 14 points as the Wizards won their third game in four tries.

Jalen Rose had 26 points for the Bulls, while Marcus Fizer added 12 points and eight rebounds.

Mavericks 102 Clippers 92

In Dallas, Steve Nash had 24 points and Dirk Nowitzki added 20 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Mavericks to a 102-92 win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Michael Finley added 20 points for Dallas, which improved its record to an NBA-best 26-5, including 15-2 at home.

Lamar Odom had 20 points and nine rebounds for the Clippers, while Corey Maggette added 17 points and eight rebounds. *Reuters*

COMPLETE RESULTS

Washington 107, Chicago 82; Dallas 102, LA Clippers 92; Phoenix 96, Philadelphia 78. *AFP*

Sta. Lucia Realty fires Black

Cariaso inks P14-M contract with Tigers

WASHINGTON Wizards' guard Michael Jordan (left) challenges Eddy Curry of the Chicago Bulls underneath the basket in this bit of NBA action. The Wizards won, 107-82. AFP

By June Navarro

STA. LUCIA Realty last night sacked Norman Black, just over a year after transforming the 10-year-old franchise from league doormat to a champion team in the PBA.

This was according to sources inside the team, who added that team manager Buddy Encarnado-quickly named Adonis Tierra as interim coach.

Black was informed of the news Thursday night, the source added.

Black won nine titles, including a grandslam for San Miguel in 1989. He also steered the Realtors to their first and only title during the 2001 Governors Cup.

The source said one of the assistant coaches, Alfrancis Chua, was offered the position but he reportedly begged off.

Meanwhile, the Coca Cola Tigers recently tied top gunner and defensive ace Jeffrey Cariaso to a three-year contract and promised to bring back the championship core responsible for capturing the prestigious PBA All Filipino Cup title last conference.

BLACK

Coca-Cola management declined to reveal the worth of the pact but sources said Cariaso, who snared the player of the conference award during the all-local tournament, would receive a financial package close to P14 million over three years.

But instead of a progressive salary base in the coming seasons, the 6-foot-2 Cariaso will have a diminished rate owing to the salary-cap rules installed by the PBA Board of Governors.

From a monthly take of roughly about P450,000 this season, Cariaso will receive a paycut next year until the 1995 Rookie of the Year awardee satisfies the maximum required salary of P350,000 in 2005.

Coca-Cola team manager Jose Bayani Baylon said the Tigers would definitely sign up 6-foot-8 Cris Bolado, Estong Ballesteros, Rafy Reavis and shooter Ato Morano, whose contracts expired last Wednesday.

"We have no plans of altering a winning formula. Changes, I guess, would be minimal," said Baylon, a Malaya columnist and a top exec at Coca-Cola Bottlers Inc.

Cariaso, who played for Alaska, Talk N Text (formerly Mobiline) and Tanduay before bringing his act to Coca-Cola, was included in the 2002 PBA mythical selection and all-defensive team.

Jordan comes home with fond memories

By Nancy Armour
AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO—There's no bitterness when Michael Jordan comes home now, only a flood of good memories that he'll cherish forever.

Thursday night's game between the Bulls and the Wizards marked only the second time Jordan was to play at the United Center as a visitor. It might not have the same emotion as his first homecoming last January, but it felt special all the same.

"The memories are always going to be here, as long as my jersey is hanging up there and those banners are hanging up there," Jordan said Thursday morning, standing beneath the banners honoring him and the six championships he helped the Bulls win.

"There's no way you can come in here and not think about all the good times that you've had, all the good games, the fans," he added. "No matter where I am, when I come into this arena, it's always going to have memories. And I don't want to forget them. I want to remember them all."

Sick of the squabbling and infighting that had turned Chicago's sixth title run into "As the Bulls Turn," Jordan walked away from basketball in January 1999. Instead of trying to hold the rest of the championship gang together, general manager Jerry Krause chose to rebuild.

The grand plan hasn't exactly worked, with the Bulls losing at least 60 games for three straight seasons. Chicago has improved this year but was 11-20 going into Thursday.

Although Jordan still wishes things could have turned out differently, he said he no longer has "ill feelings" toward Krause or chairman Jerry Reinsdorf. Time has a way of erasing the old hurts, and his stint as Wizards president showed him a thing or two.

"I come in here now with the understanding that they're trying to do what's best for their franchise and I'm trying to do what's best for ours," he said. "I put all of the hard feelings and egos out of the way and just focus on what's at present right now."

SPORTSTV

Compiled by Lorenzo Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA - Golden State Warriors vs San Antonio Spurs, 9:30 a.m., ESPN, New Orleans vs Orlando, 9:30 a.m. (r - 8 p.m.), Solar Sports
NBA Inside Stuff, 3:30 p.m. (r), Star Sports
GOLF: Best of the PGA Tour Caddies, 8:30 a.m. (r), Golf Gallery Favorites, 2:30 p.m. (r), Star Sports

Gregorio, Reyes PBA winners of coach plums

ON THE strength of their historic achievements during the 2002 Philippine Basketball Association season, Paul Ryan Gregorio of Purefoods and Vincent "Chot" Reyes of Coca-Cola were named co-winners of the coveted Virgilio "Baby" Dalupan trophy, the award handed out by the PBA Press Corps to the Coach of the Year.

The 10th Samsung-PBA Corps Awards, co-presented by San Miguel Beer and Ginebra, will be held at 7 p.m. at the Tropics Room of the Bayview Park Hotel on Roxas Boulevard.

Gregorio, taking over from Purefoods head coach Eric Altamirano, who was taken in as part of the RP-Asian Games coaching staff, steered the Hotdogs to the Governors Cup title early in the year, becoming the first interim coach in league history to earn that achievement.

Reyes, on the other hand, accomplished a first by leading a hobbled Coca-Cola Tigers team to the All-Filipino Cup crown, becoming the only team in the league's 27 years to do so on its maiden season.

Also to be honored by the Press Corps are the following: Red Bull team owner George C. Chua (Executive of the Year), Thunder strongman Davonn Harp (Defensive Player of the Year), Tigers sixth man Ato Morano (Mr. Quality Minutes), Hotdogs point guard Ronnie Magsanoc (Comeback Player of the Year) and game officials Mario Montiel (Referee of the Year).

Former PBA Commissioner Jun Bernardino will be the guest of honor, while newly minted commissioner Noli Eala will be the guest speaker.

Elmer Yanga, Selecta team manager, and Cecilio Pedro, president of Lamoiyan Incorporated will be cited for their support to various Press Corps projects, while veteran official Ernie de Leon will be inducted to the Hall of Fame, having won the Referee of the Year award three straight years from 1999 to 2001.

The sixth edition of the Extra Period magazine, the official publication of the Press, will be distributed during the Awards.

Derby to parade imported birds

AN ARRAY of imported gamefowls acquired from the United States will be fielded in the UCAP International 9-Cock Derby on Jan. 7, 9 and 11 at Mandaluyong Coliseum, making the event a must-see for eveyrone. The derby's sponsors are Sagupaan Super Feeds, PAGCOR, Heritage Hotel and Washout Shampoo.

Sportsman Sonny Lagon, back-to-back winner of Ucap's Stagfighter of the Year, will bring in the famous Sweater Lemons of Bruce Barnett. Barnett was instrumental in making Lagon's Blue Blade farm a byword in the cocking circuit.

Sabong idol Patrick Antonio, fresh from a series of trips in several US gamefarms, is ready to field Gary Giliam's round head hatch, Larry Romero's blue face hatch and Sam Caudle's frost grey battle crosses.

Also an early favorite is Jun Marasigan, one of four champions in last year's edition, who will field fast-shuffling birds from Saipan.

Submission of weights is on Jan. 6, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. For inquiries, call tels. 531-4003, 531-4005, 534-4110 and 535-2341.

RACING TIPS

AT SAN LAZARO
BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Society Girl/Ride the Lightning 2. Dalla

Race 2--1. Join the Saints 2. Misty 3. Baby My Beloved

Race 3--1. Conquer D Rose 2. Crystal City 3. Hale and Hearty 4. Magic Symbol 5. Better Beth

Race 4--1. Shape of the Wind 2. Patutina/Danielle's Angel 3. Blink and Wink 4. Mr. Positive

Race 5--1. Salamat 2. Security Xpress 3. Top Most 4. Treasured Medal 5. Summit Force

Race 6--1. Gold Honors 2. Very Sharp 3. Peek a Boo 4. Kitty Bang Bang 5. Ray Moon 6. Mark's Treasure

Race 7--1. Final Verdict 2. Main Street 3. Exchange Deal

Race 8--1. Kayang Kaya 2. Velocity 3. Mrs. Big 4. Bogart 5. Royal Lantana

Race 9--1. Royal Angel 2. Two Thumbs Up 3. Bhabe's Treasure

Race 10--1. With Distinction 2. Shining Pyramid 3. Hello Peter 4. Princess Inn

Race 11--1. D Optician 2. Headliner 3. Tender Value 4. Vinfa's Pride

Race 12--1. Everybodyhappy 2. Real material 3. Noah's Ark 4. Boogie Shoes 5. Real Charm

Race 13--1. Count Your Blessings 2. Super Dancer 3. Snowy Market 4. Flying Free 5. Perfect Gift/As for Me

Race 14--1. Eyewitness 2. Simpy Great 3. Kiss Me Quick 4. St. Emilion 5. Point of Interest 6. Thunder Speed

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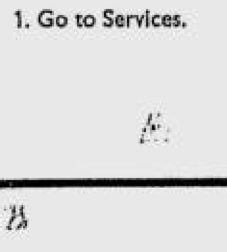
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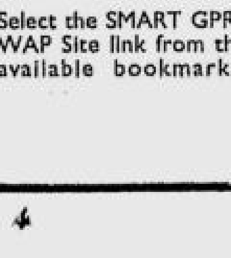
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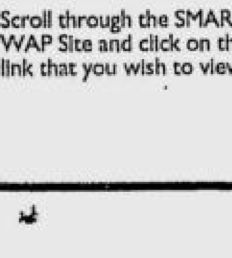
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■ On Target: The honest cops of Pangasinan /A19

METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino

■ Vendors vow to fight Fernando tooth and nail /A23

Campos slay main suspect giving up

By Christian V. Esguerra

CARDEÑO

FUGITIVE Supt. Rafael Cardeño, the alleged brains behind the Baron Cervantes murder, will surrender in time for the case's trial on Jan. 15.

In a three-hour private meeting at Sulu Hotel in Quezon City Thursday, Cardeño's lawyer Homobono Adaza assured Chief Supt. Romeo Maganto that he would personally hand over his client to authorities, the INQUIRER learned.

Contacted for comment, Maganto, who had been personally tapped by President Macapagal to hunt down Cardeño, confirmed the meeting and said the surrender "might come sooner."

Adaza sought the meeting with Maganto after both of them were interviewed in a radio program last Wednesday, according to a police source who described the breakfast meeting as "very positive."

Cardeño reportedly expressed his intention to surrender because he feared for his safety and that of his family. Being a fugitive from justice for about a year now had also been taking its toll on Cardeño and his family, the source quoted Adaza as telling Maganto.

In an interview, Maganto said he would not mind if the former chair of the Young Officers' Union would surrender, not to him, but to his "mistahs" or former classmates at the Philippine Military Academy.

Maganto, the only police general in active service who is not a "PMAer," has long been at odds with PMA graduates at the Philippine National Police. He said the rift probably kept him on floating status for more than a year.

The general's career got a second wind when the President, upon the request of the Cervantes family, formed a task force that would go after Cardeño. The family had sought Ms Macapagal's help because of PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane's failure to collar his fellow PMAer since an arrest warrant was issued against the fugitive more than two months ago.

Cervantes' father Roque yesterday expressed disappointment over Metro Manila Police chief Reynaldo Velasco's supposed pronouncement Thursday that Maganto should report to his office.

"He's only riding on the issue," Cervantes said. "His enthusiasm is too late. Why only now is he showing interest in the case when he had never bothered to work on the case before?"

Cop in Pasay shoot spree surrenders

By Alcuin Papa

THE NATIONAL Capital Region Police Office cop who is wanted for the Dec. 30 shooting of five people in Pasay City gave himself up yesterday.

After four days of hiding, PO3 Jose Salazar, detailed with the NCRPO's Regional Service Support Group and a resident of Protacio corner Tramo Streets, Pasay City, yielded to NCRPO chief Deputy Director Gen. Reynaldo Velasco.

Salazar brought along his 9 mm caliber pistol and another gun of the same caliber used by his nephew Borbie Salazar Rivera, who is also a suspect in the Dec. 30 shooting.

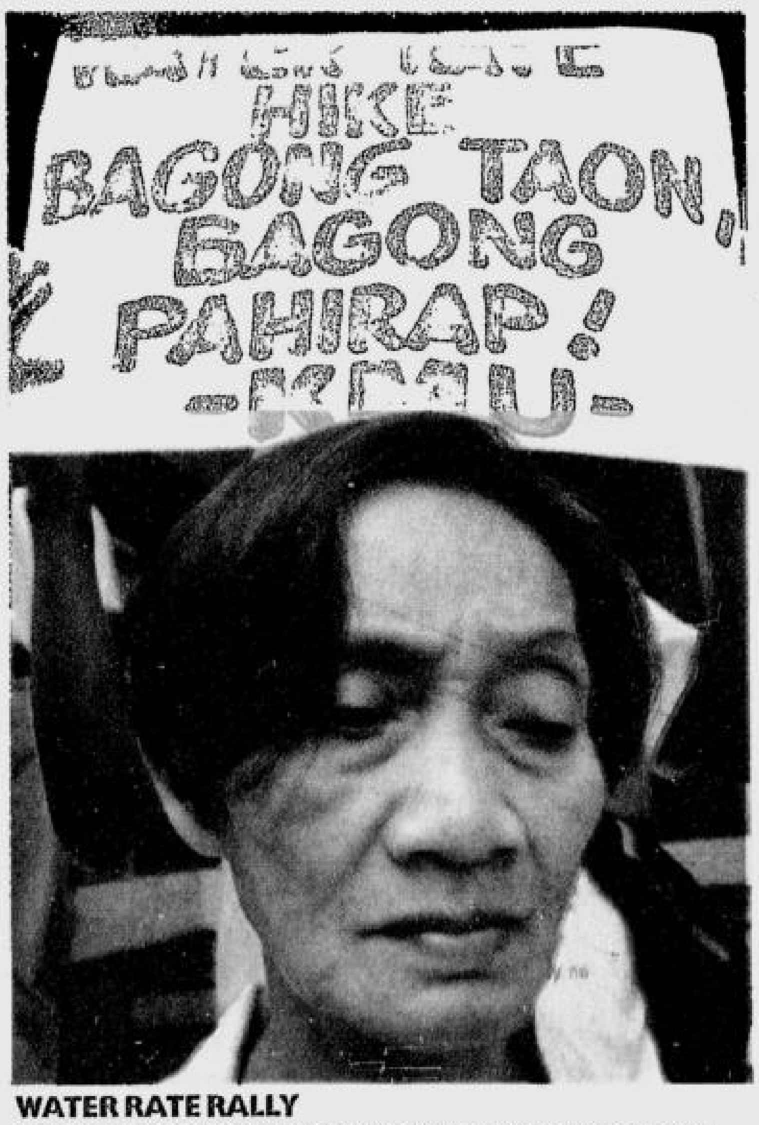
The officer said he gave himself up to face the charges filed against him for the shooting and to prove that he had nothing to do with the shooting.

For his part, Velasco said it was proper for Salazar to turn himself in peacefully rather than hide out "so he could have his day in court."

Salazar and Rivera were tagged by the Pasay City police for killing Catalino Bautista Jr., of Villagloria Street, Pinagbuhatan, Pasay City and the wounding of Anthony Petilla, 25, Joselito Manlangit, 22, Antonieta Petilla, 52, and PO2 Bernard Cubero, 31, a policeman assigned to the Western Police District Traffic Enforcement Group.

The shooting occured at around 12:15 a..m. last December 30 inside 2268 Tramo St., Pasay City.

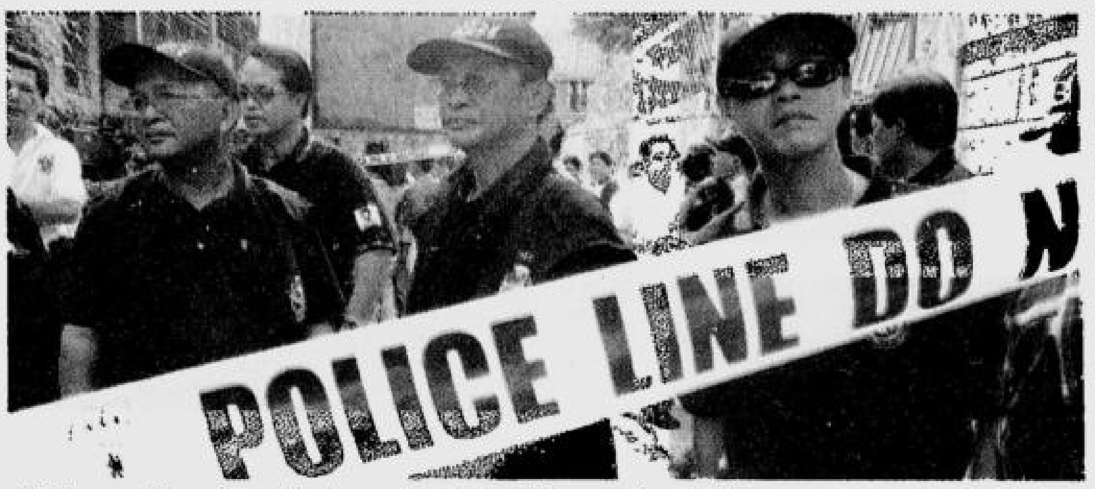
Witnesses had tagged the duo as the suspects and claimed that, prior to the shooting, the two men confronted Petilla over an old grudge. At some point in the confrontation, they said Rivera drew his handgun and shot Petilla. This reportedly started the shooting spree which left the others injured.



WATER RATE RALLY

Thirst and anger are etched on face of this woman, a member of a militant group that picketed the MWSS Cubao branch yesterday to protest water rate hike. JOAN BONDOC

Laboratory already abandoned when police raided the townhouse



AREA around townhouse that served as shabu refinery cordoned off. JOAN BONDOC

Shabu refinery yields ₱2 billion in drugs

By Alcuin Papa

RAW materials to manufacture more than P2 billion worth of shabu were recovered from a shabu refinement laboratory in Quezon City that was raided by police and narcotics agents yesterday.

However, authorities failed to nab the two maintainers of the shabu lab as they had already slipped out of the country last month.

Police and anti-narcotics agents said the townhouse at 6-F Sobrepena St., Barangay Damayang Lagi in the New Manila area in Quezon City was being used as a shabu laboratory which was maintained by the two Chinese drug dealers who ran the big drug factory that was discovered after it burned in Valenzuela early last month.

Anti-narcotics agents of the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and the Central Police District conducted the raid yesterday at around 10:30 a.m. armed with a search warrant issued by Quezon City Regional Trial Court judge Monina Zenarosa.

Recovered were an undetermined amount of raw materials for the manufacture of shabu like ephenedrine, sodium hydrochloride capable of making around 1,000 kilos of the finished product; some 10 kilos of shabu, other laboratory equipment, sacks of charcoal, a Mitsubishi L-300 van (AED-670) and a green Honda CRV (XBC-288).

Also found inside the townhouse was a bloodied jacket.

The shabu laboratory was already abandoned when police raided the townhouse.

National Capital Region Police Office chief Deputy Director Reynaldo Velasco said maintainers of the shabu lab, identified as Chinese Wang Yashi, alias Willy Ong, and Deng Xiaoli, alias Lucy, had already slipped out of the country last Dec. 9 and 10 respectively, or just a few hours after their shabu warehouse burned down in Valenzuela City last Dec. 9.

ASSORTED elements in the manufacture of shabu, like this sugar-like substance in a sack, are seized. JOAN BONDOC

"This place is an extension of their warehouse which burned down in Valenzuela City. They cook the drugs in Valenzuela and refine and package it for distribution here," Velasco said.

For his part, NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the discovery of some money indicated that the place also served as distrbution center for shabu.

"The neighbors, many of them doctors, said they saw persons visiting the apartment only during unholy hours," Wycoco said, "but it seems nobody has visited for some time."

Last Dec. 9, a fire hit a warehouse inside the Elvica Compound in Lawang Bato, Valenzuela. Firemen and police later found that the warehouse was being used as a shabu laboratory.

Recovered were about P3.2 billion worth of shabu and raw materials.

Velasco added that they are now hunting down another cohort of the duo, identified as Randy Chua, whom they believe is still in the country.

The shabu lab raided yesterday was the seventh raided in as many months.

Velasco also pointed out that the recovered Honda CRV was used by Wang Yashi and Deng Xiaoli to elude arrest just after the fire in Valenzuela last Dec. 9.

According to NBI Narcotics Division chief Atty. Raul Lasalla, they managed to trace the Honda CRV to the townhouse in Quezon City. Aside from that, his unit was casing the townhouse for two months already until they were able to verify that shabu was indeed being shipped and refined there.

Lasalla added that he and his men are coordinating with the CPD as well as other police district in Metro Manila to case out other suspected shabu laboratories being run by Wang Yashi's group, whom he said was part of the Chinese Triad group.

"We are also looking at the suspects' bank accounts which we suspect hold millions of pesos, and the companies which might have supplied the group with the chemicals," said Lasalla.

Central Police District director Sr. Supt. Napoleon Castro said that the shabu laboratory is capable of handling around 2,000 kilos of shabu at any given time. The shabu is then distributed around Metro Manila as well as peripheral areas from Bulacan to Cavite.

Drugs Pinoy's No. 1 worry

By Leila B. Salaverria

MORE than anything else, most Filipinos want the police to focus on solving the illegal drug menace in society.

This was according to a Pulse Asia survey commissioned by Interior and Local Government Secretary Joey Lina. He revealed the survey results during his New Year's Call speech at the National Police Commission office yesterday.

Kidnapping, theft and robbery are tied for second place, while corruption within the police ranks, rape and other forms of sexual abuse round out the top five concerns that citizens want the Philippine National Police to address.

Survey results show that an average of 61% of Filipinos rated the trading and use of illegal drugs as the prime concern the police should be addressing. 59% put theft, robbery and kidnapping in second place.

41% of our countrymen want the police to zero in on corruption within their ranks, while another 41% say the law enforcers should focus on rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

More Metro Manila residents are concerned about illegal drugs, theft and robbery, while Mindanaoans are more worried about kidnapping. More respondents from Luzon are concerned about rape, while almost all geographical groups, except for Visayans, are equally concerned about corruption among lawmen.

During his address, Lina vowed to implement plans that would curb the crimes that people are concerned about.

"We have to crack our heads to come up with innovative, projects and programs this year," he said, adding that he would present his specific programs during a cabinet meeting in Malacañang.

Lina said police would also address the other concerns of the Filipinos about the police as revealed by the survey. This includes worries about the PNP's productivity, proper training, possession of equipment and adequate salary. He said he would include terrorism and prostitution to the list.

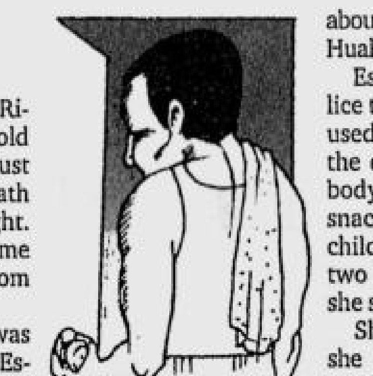
WAZZZZ UP?

Cowboy Grill, Brgy. Almanza, Las Piñas	SAINTS THINKERS w/ JOGRAD	AEGIS JAN. 21 ☎ 801.7644
Cowboy Grill, 1190 Arquiza St. Manila	ICE KENDI HIMIG / MR. ROXY	AEGIS JAN. 14 ☎ 525.1474
Cowboy Grill, 431 Remedios St. Malate	KNIGHTS STREETLIFE	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 521.8143
Cowboy Grill, Novaliches, Quezon City	GABRIELA KOOLJACKS	AEGIS JAN. 28 ☎ 936.9757
Tia Maria's, Jupiter St. Makati City	FU FLAVA MINDSTUCK	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 890.4735
Tia Maria's, Remedios, Malate	FIRST SIGHT 3RD MOVEMENT	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 522.0429
Tia Maria's, Tomas Morato, Q.C.	7TH ELEMENT 3RD DEGREE	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ 371.1473
OUTSIDE METRO MANILA		
Cowboy Grill, Biñan, Laguna	POWER SURGE BROWNIE / MUSIC CIRCUIT	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ (049)511.7268
Partyplace, San Fernando, Pampanga	SILVER BOX	☎ (045) 961.3360

SATURDAY January 04 2003 422-9877

Fatal shower

By Leila B. Salaverria



JEEPNEY driver Ricardo M. Hualde told his son he was just going to take a bath on Thursday night. But he never came out of the bathroom alive.

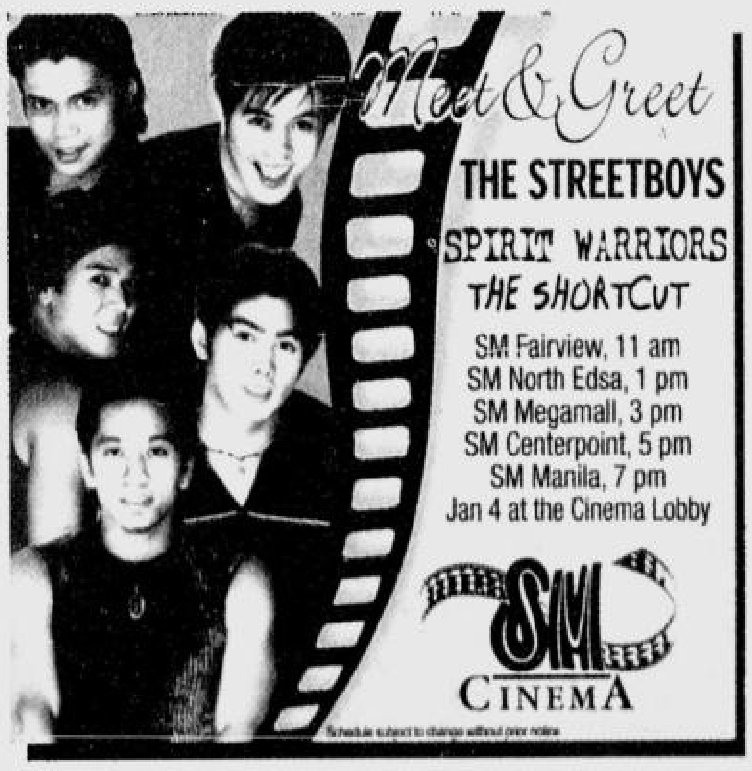
Hualde, 37, was found by his wife Estrellita hanging from the ceiling with a blanket tied around his neck at 8:45 p.m. on Thursday. He was rushed to the Makati Medical Center where he was declared dead on arrival.

Police said that a few days before Hualde's death, he and his wife, mother and sister had been fighting about the rearing of Hualde's children.

Estrellita told police that Hualde had used shabu. Prior to the discovery of his body, Hualde had a snack with his two children and drank two bottles of beer, she said.

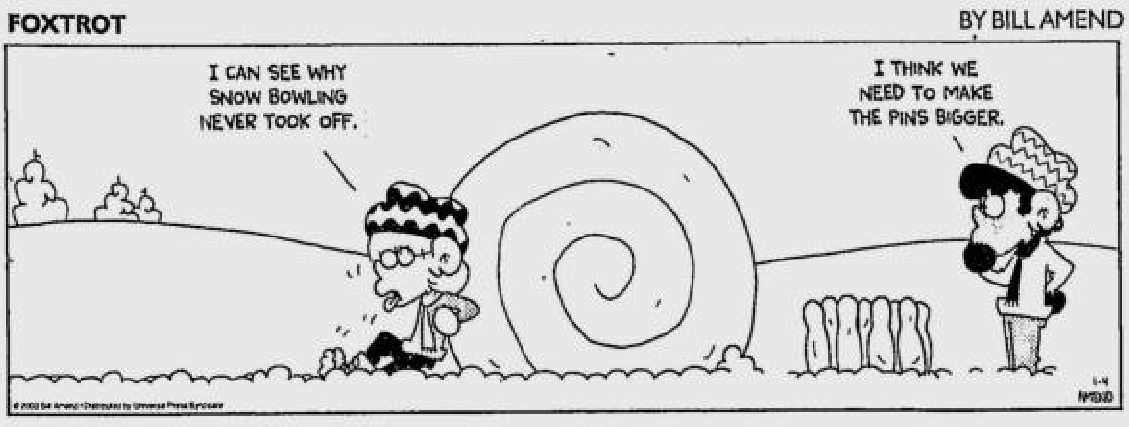
She added that she did not notice anything suspicious about her husband that day.

A 75-year-old Fil-Chinese woman leapt to her death from the 29th floor of a building in Makati also on Thursday, while a 39-year-old man hanged himself during his father's wake in Tondo on the same day.

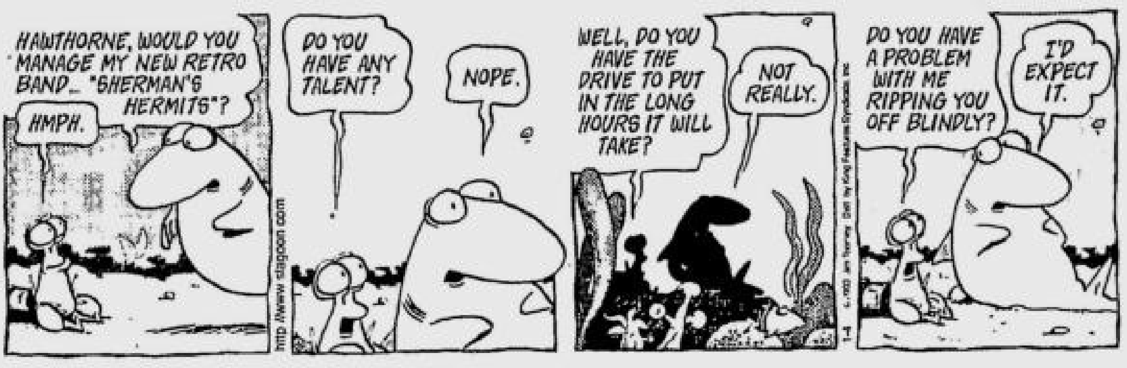

Meet & Greet
THE STREETBOYS
SPIRIT WARRIORS
THE SHORTCUT
SM Fairview, 11 am
SM North Edsa, 1 pm
SM Megamall, 3 pm
SM Centerpoint, 5 pm
SM Manila, 7 pm
Jan 4 at the Cinema Lobby
SM CINEMA
Schedule subject to change without prior notice

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
ComicRelief
e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph
SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 2003

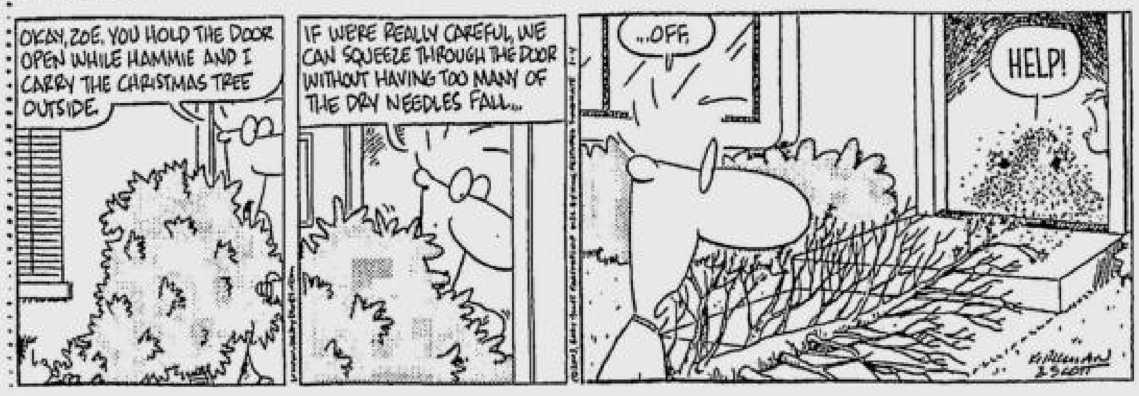
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


I CAN SEE WHY SNOW BOWLING NEVER TOOK OFF.
I THINK WE NEED TO MAKE THE PINS BIGGER.
1-4
AMEND

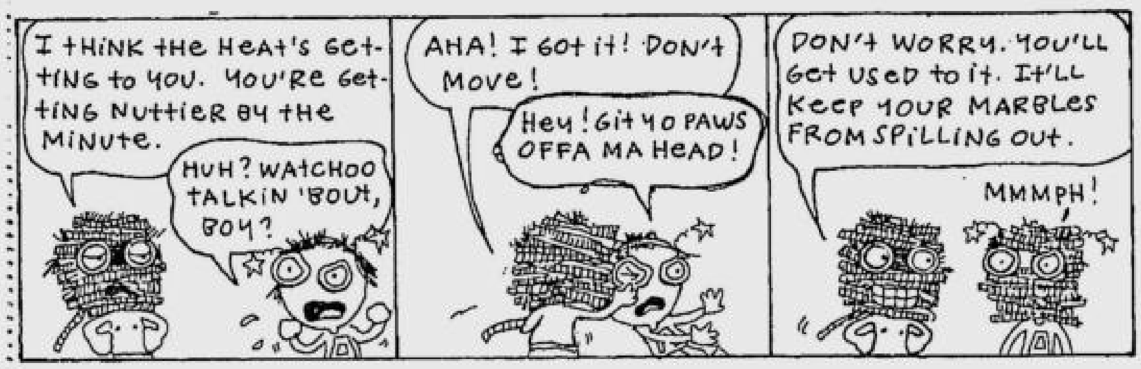
SHERMAN'S LAGOON BY JIM TOOMEY


HAWTHORNE, WOULD YOU MANAGE MY NEW RETRO BAND... "SHERMAN'S HERMITS"?
HMPH.
http://www.slagoon.com
DO YOU HAVE ANY TALENT?
NOPE.
WELL, DO YOU HAVE THE DRIVE TO PUT IN THE LONG HOURS IT WILL TAKE?
NOT REALLY.
DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ME RIPPING YOU OFF BLINDLY?
I'D EXPECT IT.

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


OKAY, ZOE. YOU HOLD THE DOOR OPEN WHILE HAMMIE AND I CARRY THE CHRISTMAS TREE OUTSIDE.
IF WE'RE REALLY CAREFUL, WE CAN SQUEEZE THROUGH THE DOOR WITHOUT HAVING TOO MANY OF THE DRY NEEDLES FALL...
...OFF.
HELP!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY BYLYRA GARCELLANO


I tHiNK tHe HeAt's GettiNG to You. You'Re GettiNG NuttieR By tHe MiNute.
HUH? WAtCHOO TALKiN 'BOUt, BOY?
AHA! I Got it! DoN't Move!
Hey! Git Yo PAWS OFFA MA HeAD!
DON't WORRY. YOU'LL Get USeD to it. It'LL Keep YOUR MARBLES FROM SPiLLING Out.
MMMPH!

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Dyan Cannon, Patty Loveless, Michael Stipe, Matt Frewer

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Focus and settle on what it is you really want to get done this year. Surround yourself with positive people who can reassure you that you are moving in the right direction. Think upbeat and you will make a greater impact. Your numbers are 9, 14, 22, 29, 37, 40

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Emotional problems may affect your decisions. Be open about what you are facing and deal with your difficulties slowly, methodically and thoroughly.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You will meet new and exciting friends today. Someone from your past will come back into your life. Don't be too eager to trust this individual.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Socializing with friends will be enlightening. Travel will stimulate your curiosity and bring you into contact with new friends. Investments can be made if you are careful.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You will pick up a lot of information from the material you read today. Make changes to your surroundings, but don't exceed a set budget. Stay busy.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You will be very upset if you have allowed someone to make you look foolish. You will be prone to extravagance to make yourself feel better. Be smart and observe rather than take part.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You may be disillusioned regarding a financial venture today. Don't let those you love talk you into investing in something that isn't likely to pay returns.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Pleasure trips will bring you knowledge, joy and newfound friends. You will have conversations with interesting and informative individuals who will brighten your outlook and give you new ideas.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Look into career changes or start your own small business. Don't expect to get help from others. You will get great satisfaction if you do the work yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You must learn to say no today. Don't take on issues or projects that you aren't completely comfortable with. Be diplomatic when dealing with other people's problems.

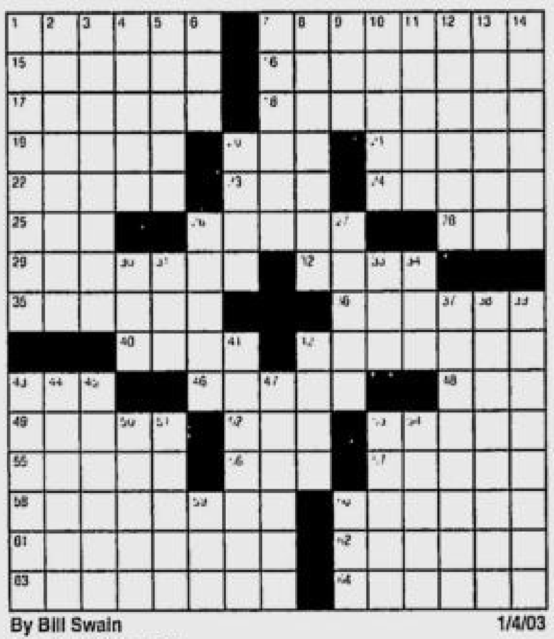
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You may want to back off and let someone you are dealing with do the initiating and talking. You will discover far more about this person if you aren't intimidating. Don't elaborate too much about your goals.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): There is no point in hiding your true feelings today. Lay your cards on the table and try to sort out an amiable way to solve the existing problems.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): This will be a good day to network. You can get involved in excellent investments if you are in the right place at the right time. Laziness will be your downfall.

Birthday Baby: You will be gifted in so many different ways that you may find it difficult to choose one direction in life. You will always be trying to do things that those around you may not understand. You will be innovative and inventive.

DAILY CROSSWORD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By Bill Swain
New Port Richey, FL

1/4/03

ACROSS
1 Ruler measurement
7 Apple groves
15 Feminist Bloomer
16 South Carolina birthplace of Joe Frazier
17 Increasing
18 Script doctor?
19 Forest clearing
20 Malleable metal
21 Exchange
22 Sank (a putt)
23 __ behind the ears
24 Worsted cloth
25 Scope out
26 Ice-cream holders
28 Casual agreement
29 Dwells
32 Speak roughly
35 Blow a gasket
36 Wood planks
40 Wool producers
42 Fix up
43 Maugham story, "Cakes and __"
46 Pro driver
48 Adriatic or Caspian
49 Written passages
52 Newsman Rather
53 Vaporized water
55 Silent
56 Kernel
57 Gem from an oyster
58 Representative examples
60 __ the Pooh
61 Release
62 Ryan and Cara
63 Like an open prairie
64 Porters

DOWN
1 Chucklers
2 Worker
3 Language of Katmandu
4 Move smoothly
5 Like a fork
6 Crone
7 Talk-show host Conan
8 Come back in
9 Crow's comment
10 Causes pain
11 In flames
12 Type of telephone dial
13 Deepen a harbor
14 "Sophie's Choice" Oscar winner
20 Couples
26 One who relinquishes something
27 Heavy cavalry sword
30 Dander
31 Dawn lawn layer
33 Mayday letters
34 Butter serving
37 Single-name comic
38 More dismal
39 Like a smooth transition
41 Dejection
42 Tenant's payment
43 Certify
44 Jumper
45 Provoke passion
47 Reasons
50 Championship
51 Perch at a lunch counter
53 V.P. Agnew
54 Doctrine
59 Shemp's tormentor
60 Punster

Friday's Puzzle Solved

A	B	E	L	E	■	A	L	I	B	I	■	B	O	G
C	O	R	E	R	■	N	O	L	A	N	■	A	N	N
R	O	A	D	R	U	N	N	E	R	S	■	C	S	A
F	T	T	U	■	R	U	E	■	■	T	A	K	E	S
■	■	■	P	R	I	M	R	O	S	E	P	A	T	H
D	I	C	T	U	■	■	■	R	E	P	E	L	■	■
O	L	E	O	S	■	I	U	B	E	■	S	L	A	G
F	I	N	■	T	H	E	P	I	K	E	■	E	L	I
F	E	T	A	■	E	A	S	T	■	M	A	Y	O	R
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S	I	R	E	E	T	S	M	A	H	T	S	■	■	■
P	U	L	S	E	■	■	A	B	C	■	W	A	H	D
I	R	A	■	F	I	F	T	H	A	V	E	N	U	E
C	O	N	■	E	R	A	T	O	■	E	R	A	S	E
E	W	E	■	D	E	T	E	R	■	E	S	T	E	R

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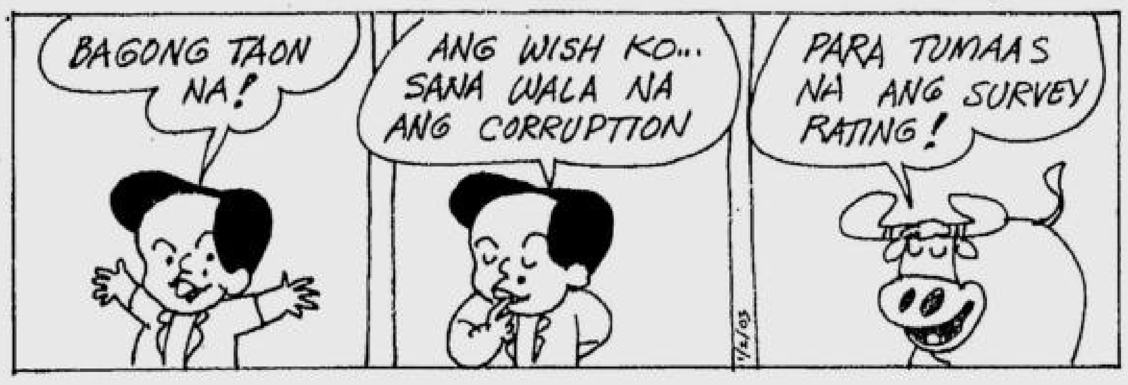
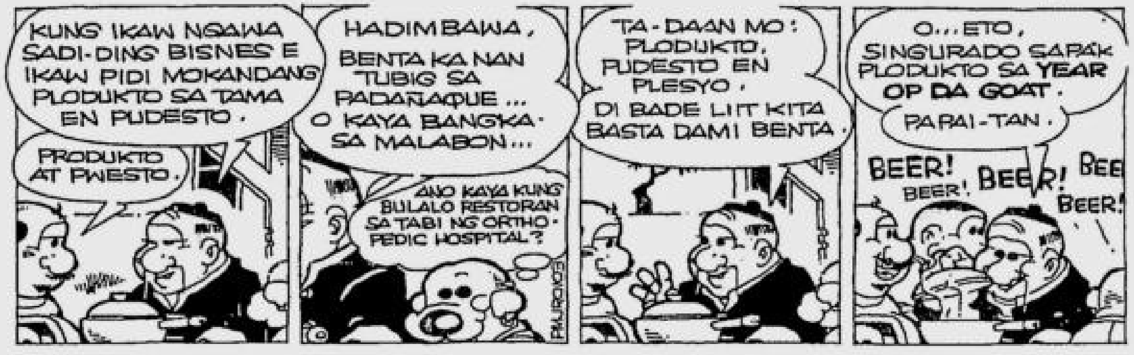
1/4/03

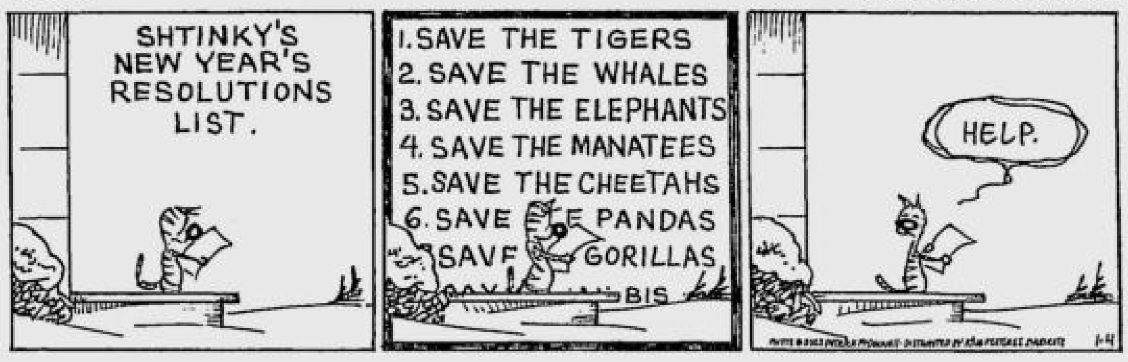
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


BAGONG TAON NA!
ANG WISH KO... SANA WALA NA ANG CORRUPTION
PARA TUMAAS NA ANG SURVEY RATING!
1/4/03

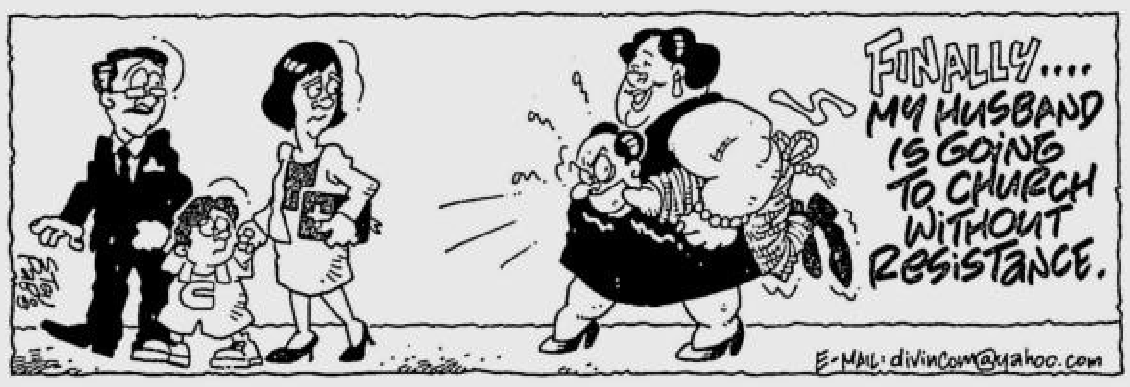
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


KUNG IKAW NGAWA SADI-DING BISNES E IKAW PIDI MOKANDANG PLODUKTO SA TAMA EN PUDESTO.
PRODUKTO AT PWESTO.
HADIMBAWA, BENTA KA NAN TUBIG SA PADAÑAQUE ... O KAYA BANGKA SA MALABON...
ANO KAYA KUNG BULALO RESTORAN SA TABI NG ORTHO-PEDIC HOSPITAL?
PM JR 2003
TA-DAAN MO: PLODUKTO, PUDESTO EN PLESYO. DI BADE LIIT KITA BASTA DAMI BENTA.
O... ETO, SINGURADO SAPAK PLODUKTO SA YEAR OP DA GOAT.
PARAI-TAN.
BEER! BEER! BEER! BEER! BEER!

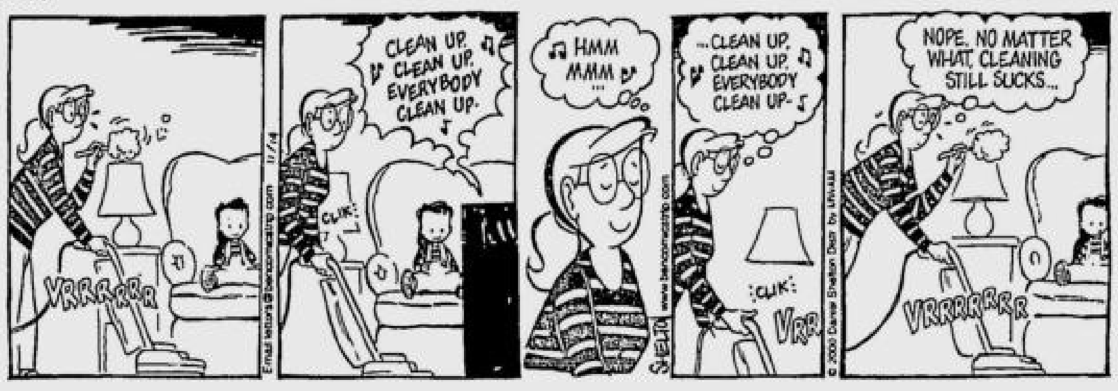
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHTINKY'S NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS LIST.
1. SAVE THE TIGERS
2. SAVE THE WHALES
3. SAVE THE ELEPHANTS
4. SAVE THE MANATEES
5. SAVE THE CHEETAHS
6. SAVE E PANDAS
SAVE GORILLAS
BIS
HELP.
1-4

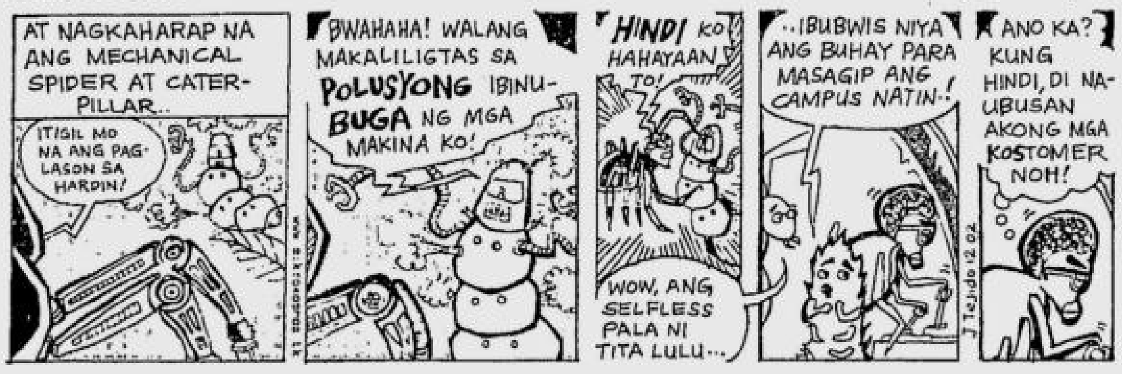
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


FINALLY.... MY HUSBAND IS GOING TO CHURCH WITHOUT RESISTANCE.
E-MAIL: divinCom@yahoo.com

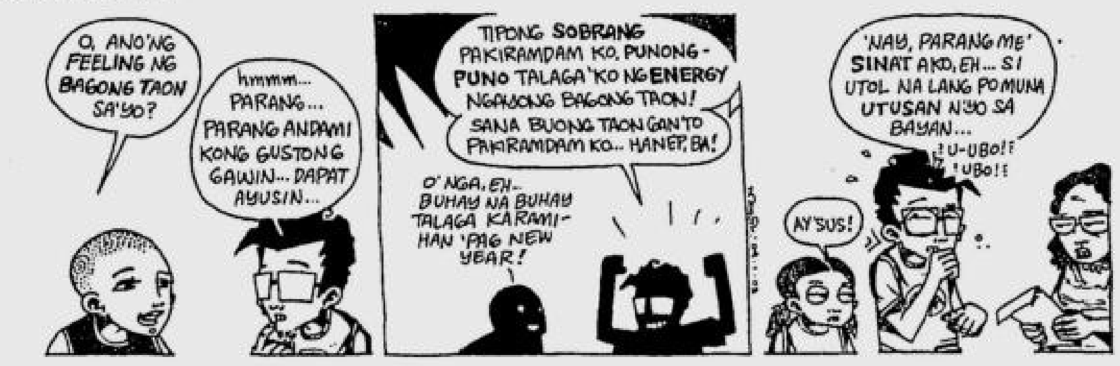
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


VRRRRRR
CLEAN UP, CLEAN UP, EVERYBODY CLEAN UP.
CLIK!
HMM MMM ...
...CLEAN UP, CLEAN UP, EVERYBODY CLEAN UP-
CLIK!
VRR
NOPE, NO MATTER WHAT, CLEANING STILL SUCKS...
VRRRRRRR

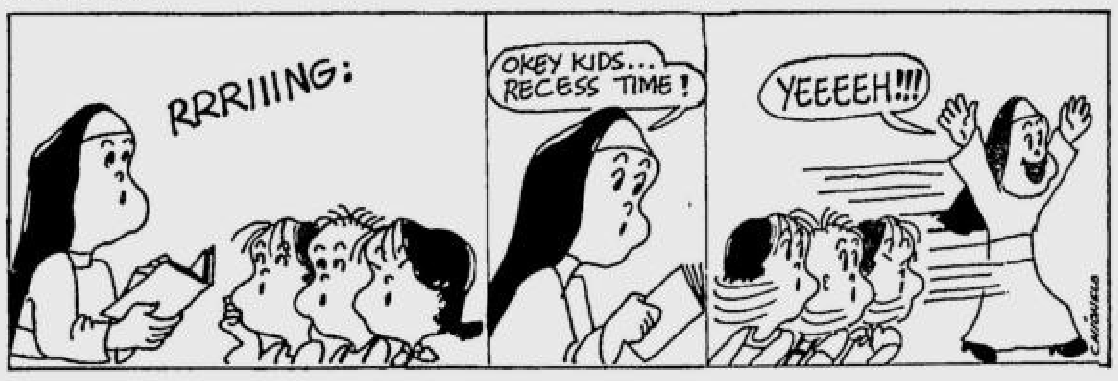
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


AT NAGKAHARAP NA ANG MECHANICAL SPIDER AT CATER-PILLAR..
ITIGIL MO NA ANG PAG-LASON SA HARDIN!
BWAHAHA! WALANG MAKALILIGTAS SA POLUSYONG IBINUBUGA NG MGA MAKINA KO!
HINDI KO HAHAYAAN TO!
WOW, ANG SELFLESS PALA NI TITA LULU...
..IBUBWIS NIYA ANG BUHAY PARA MASAGIP ANG CAMPUS NATIN..!
J. Tejido 12.02
ANO KA? KUNG HINDI, DI NA-UBUSAN AKONG MGA KOSTOMER NOH!

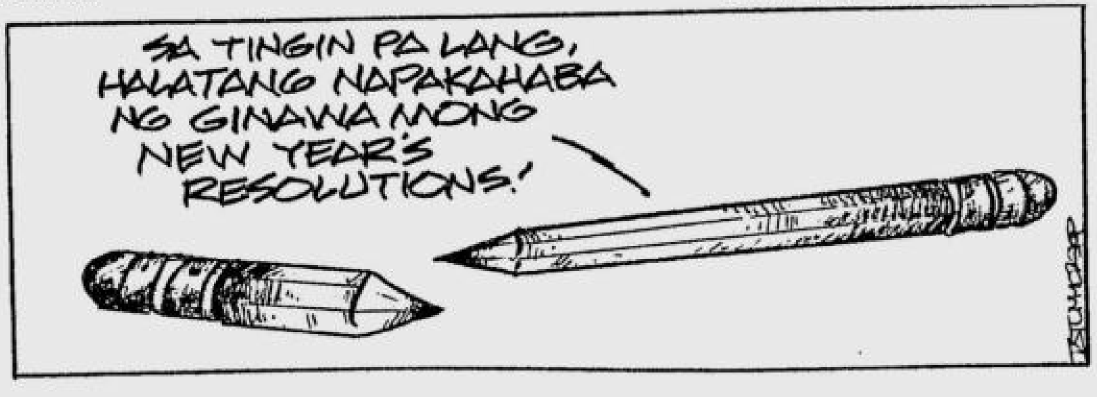
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


O, ANO'NG FEELING NG BAGONG TAON SA'YO?
hmmm... PARANG... PARANG ANDAMI KONG GUSTONG GAWIN... DAPAT AYUSIN...
TIPONG SOBRANG PAKIRAMDAM KO, PUNONG-PUNO TALAGA 'KO NG ENERGY NGAYONG BAGONG TAON!
SANA BUONG TAON GAN'TO PAKIRAMDAM KO... HANEP, BA!
O' NGA, EH.. BUHAY NA BUHAY TALAGA KARAMI-HAN 'PAG NEW YEAR!
'NAY, PARANG ME' SINAT AKO, EH... SI UTOL NA LANG PO MUNA UTUSAN N'YO SA BAYAN...
!U-UBO!! !UBO!!
AY'SUS!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


RRRIIING:
OKEY KIDS... RECESS TIME!
YEEEEH!!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SA TINGIN PA LANG, HALATANG NAPAKAHABA NG GINAWA MONG NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS!

The honest cops of Pangasinan

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

WHOEVER said that all cops can't be trusted with money didn't know what he was talking about.

Most cops, especially those in the provinces, are honest and incorruptible. The problem is that the good deeds of honest cops are not as widely publicized as the misdeeds of their rogue comrades.

Just take the exemplary honesty of some members of the police force of Sison, Pangasinan, which was buried in an inside page of a big-circulation morning daily (not the INQUIRER), when it should have seen print on its front page.

* * *

The provincial cops returned P10 million in cash and millions of pesos worth of jewelry and other personal belongings of victims of a car accident. The mishap took place on the town's highway on Dec. 26.

The victims were Emilia Sta. Cruz Hermoso, 79, and her daughter, 19, who both died on the spot. Their Jaguar car collided head-on with a bus. Hermoso owned the Liberty Bank in Meycauayan, Bulacan.

Policemen who arrived at the scene gathered all the victims' cash and belongings, kept them for a while until the family claimed the recovered items. Every single centavo was accounted for.

* * *

Philippine National Police chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. was so elated at the report that he promoted all the honest cops on the spot.

Ebdane said he was still thinking of additional rewards for them.

Cheers!

* * *

In contrast, PO2 Armand Galit and PO2 Rolando Ruivivar of the Makati police station, have consistently refused to hand over to the parents of Rex Lozarita, 30, the items found in his car. Lozarita was seriously injured.

The victim was driving along C-5 road on Dec. 24 when his car overturned. He was on his way to a noche buena at his parents' house when he met the accident.

* * *

Officers Galit and Ruivivar were on the scene minutes after the accident. Renante Melgar, a civic-spirited citizen, who collected all of Lozarita's cash and personal belongings, handed them over to the cops.

The items recovered by Melgar consisted of P50,000 wrapped around a piece of cloth; P2,000 in P20 bills, car stereo, cellular phone, bottles of wine, fruits and ham.

Galit and Ruivivar only returned Lozarita's cellular phone. And you know what? They had the temerity to demand a "reward" for the cell phone from the victim's father.

> They returned P10 million in cash and millions of pesos worth of jewelry

* * *

Adults who had their fingers blasted by firecrackers during the New Year's Eve revelry do not deserve sympathy.

However, I pity the child victims because they didn't know any better.

These adults had been warned about the danger of firecracker explosion to themselves and to others. The media had even published pictures of firecracker victims of previous New Year's eves.

Some people don't learn from the bitter experience of others.

* * *

I know of a character who accidentally disfigured himself while he was celebrating New Year's Eve several years ago.

This guy was very drunk as he was throwing firecrackers with his drinking buddies. He was smoking a cigarette that he used in lighting up the firecrackers.

Because he was so soused, he inadvertently threw the lighted cigarette and placed the firecracker in his lips.

* * *

Why explode firecrackers to "drive away evil spirits of the old year" when you can bang pots and pans?

Why burn tires in the middle of the road to celebrate the coming of the New Year when burning incense or lighting candles for the good spirits will do?

The thrill of exploding the firecracker?

Is the risk of being injured or killed worth the thrill? Crazy!

* * *

How do we prevent accidents as a result of exploding firecrackers?

By not exploding them, stupid!

* * *

I know some wealthy families that bought tens, even hundreds, of thousands of pesos worth of firecrackers and other pyrotechnics for the New Year's Eve revelry.

It's none of my business, but I can't understand why they spent so much money on nonessentials when all around them were people who didn't have food on their tables on noche buena or New Year's Eve.

These wealthy families could have shared their blessings with the poor and gotten good karma in return.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, January 4, 2003
Before Epiphany

1st Reading:	1 Jn 3:7-10
Gospel:	Jn 1:35-42

John was standing in Bethabara beyond the Jordan with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and said, "There is the Lamb of God." On hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. He turned and saw them following, and he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Rabbi (which means Master), where are you staying?" Jesus said, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he stayed and spent the rest of that day with him. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard what John had said and followed Jesus. Early the next morning he found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means the Christ), and he brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John, but you shall be called Cephas" (which means Rock).

Commentary

Today, we see that self-forgetful witness initiates the process of discipleship. John the Baptist does not try to keep his disciples tied to himself, but points them to Jesus and "lets them go," as it were. His two disciples henceforth follow Jesus, and leave John behind. In a similar spirit, Andrew, after his encounter with Jesus, does not hold on to Jesus as his personal and exclusive possession, but runs to share his experience with his brother Simon, whom he brings to Jesus. How much do our lives point to Jesus? How much do we seek to share our experience of him with others? Are we willing, like John, like Andrew, to "drop out of the picture" quietly, so that those whom we lead can experience and focus on Jesus, asking them what they seek, inviting them to come and see where he lives and to stay with him?

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

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LASTIKMAN	LASTIKMAN	MANO PO	MANO PO 12:40, 3:20, 6:00, 8:40, 11:20	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
ANG AGIMAT	DEKADA '70 12:10, 2:45, 5:20, 7:55, 10:30	Onstage JOSE MARI CHAN - HEART OF A SONG WRITER Jan. 17 - 18 / 9PM	LASTIKMAN 10:50, 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20	DEKADA '70
MANO PO	ANG ALAMAT NG LAWIN		ANG AGIMAT 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:25, 11:30	AGIMAT
	ANG AGIMAT		SPIRIT WARRIORS 2 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30	LASTIKMAN
	MANO PO			
	HOME ALONE DA RIBER			

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2 AGIMAT
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4 AGIMAT
5 LASTIKMAN
6 MANO PO

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(Las Pinas) tel 873.5004
1 LASTIKMAN
2 MANO PO

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1 DEKADA '70
2 AGIMAT

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2 AGIMAT
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
4 MANI PO

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5 AGIMAT
6 DEKADA '70
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9 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

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1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 DEKADA '70
5 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
6 LASTIKMAN
7 MANO PO
8 HULI MO HULI KO
9 HOME ALONG

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2 AGIMAT
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5 LASTIKMAN

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4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
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2 MANO PO
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4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

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2 MANO PO
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

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2 LASTIKMAN

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1 AGIMAT
2 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

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2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO
4 AGIMAT
5 SPIRIT WARRIORS: THE SHORT CUT
6 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
7 HOME ALONF DA RIBER

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1 LASTIKMAN
2 AGIMAT

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Cinema 2000 Target Mall
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1 LASTIKMAN
2 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
3 MANO PO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 MANO PO
2 LASTIKMAN
3 DEKADA '70
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORCUT
4 LASTIKMAN

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2 MANO PO
3 AGIMAT
4 RESERVE

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2 LASTIKMAN
3 AGIMAT
4 MANO PO

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2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO

Lianas Cinema
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2 AGIMAT
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 LASTIKMAN

Lianas MovieCity
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1 HOME ALONG D RIBER
2 AGIMAT
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
5 HULI MO HULI KO

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 HOME ALONG D RIBER

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1 HOME ALONG D RIBER
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

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1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 DEKADA '70
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 AGIMAT

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808
1 AGIMAT
2 HOME ALONG D RIBER

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657
1 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0798
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 DEKADA '70
4 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 AGIMAT
2 MANO PO
3 DEKADA '70
4 SPIRIT WARRIOR THE SHORTCUT

Cine Nepo Mall
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1 MANO PO
2 LASTIKMAN
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 AGIMAT

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1 HULA MO, HULI KO
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
4 MANO PO
5 AGIMAT
6 LASTIKMAN
7 DEKADA '70
8 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

SM CENTERPOINT
7149522 -7161416
1 LASTIKMAN
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 MANO PO
4 DEKADA '70
5 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
6 HULA MO, HULI KO
7 AGIMAT
8 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749
1 HULA MO, HULI KO
2 DEKADA '70
3 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
4 AGIMAT
5 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
6 LASTIKMAN
7 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
8 LASTIKMAN
9 MANO PO
10 LAPU LAPU
11 LASTIKMAN
12 ALAMAT NG LAWIN

SM CITY MANILA
5239240
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 MANO PO
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 LASTIKMAN
5 DEKADA '70
6 AGIMAT
7 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
8 LAPU LAPU
9 LASTIKMAN
10 HULA MO, HULI KO
11 MANO PO
12 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM MEGAMALL
6331901 • 6329401
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 LASTIKMAN
4 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6 LAPU LAPU
7 HULA MO, HULI KO
8 MANO PO
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
11 DEKADA '70
12 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452
1 HULA MO, HULI KO
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
4 DEKADA '70
5 MANO PO
6 LASTIKMAN
7 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
8 AGIMAT

SM SOUTHMALL
8066888
1 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
2 DEKADA '70
3 AGIMAT
4 LASTIKMAN
5 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
6 HULA MO, HULI KO
7 MANO PO
8 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM CITY CEBU
2313876
1 MANO PO
2 AGIMAT
3 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
4 DEKADA '70
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
7 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8 MANO PO

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422
1 DEKADA '70
2 CLOSED
3 AGIMAT
4 MANO PO
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
7 CLOSED
8 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015
1 LASTIKMAN
2 AGIMAT
3 MANO PO
4 DEKADA '70
5 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
4 MANO PO

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO
4 AGIMAT

SM CITY DAVAO
2976998
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 MANO PO
4 DEKADA '70
5 LASTIKMAN
6 AGIMAT

SM BICUTAN
1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
2 MANO PO
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AGIMAT

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO
4 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

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1 SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
10:50 FS/11:20 MF/1:30/3:40/5:50/8:00/ 9:40 LFS/10:10 LMF/11:50 END

2 MANO PO
10:50 FS/11:20 MF/2:00/4:40/7:20/ 9:35 LFS/10:00 LMF/12:15 END

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10 HULA MO HULI KO
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4 SPIRIT WARRIORS
5 MANO PO
6 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
7 LASTIKMAN

Metro East - Marcos hway 682- 8193 / 8280
1 AGIMAT
2 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
3 LASTIKMAN
4 DEKADA '70
5 HULA MO HULI KO
6 MANO PO
7 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
8 SPIRIT WARRIORS

Novaliches 935- 3229 - 30
1 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
2 DEKADA '70
3 AGIMAT
4 HULA MO HULI KO
5 MANO PO
6 LASTIKMAN
7 HOME ALONE DA RIBER
8 SPIRIT WARRIORS

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1 MANO PO
2 LASTIKMAN
3 AGIMAT
4 SPIRIT WARRIORS

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1 ALAMAT NG LAWIN
2 MANO PO
3 DEKADA '70
4 AGIMAT
5 LASTIKMAN
6 SPIRIT WARRIORS

Imus 471- 8188 / 875- 3838
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2 MANO PO
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS
4 LASTIKMAN
5 DEKADA '70
6 HOME ALONE DA RIBER

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2 SPIRIT WARRIORS
3 DEKADA '70
4 AGIMAT
5 MANO PO

Bacolod 441- 0453 / 0459
1 LIKE MIKE
2 DEKADA 70
3 LASTIKMAN
4 MANO PO
5 HOME ALONG THE RIBER
6 AGIMAT

Iloilo 336- 8077 - 78
1 AGIMAT
2 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT WARRIORS
4 DEKADA '70
5 DIE ANOTHER DAY/HOME ALONG THE RIBER
6 MANO PO

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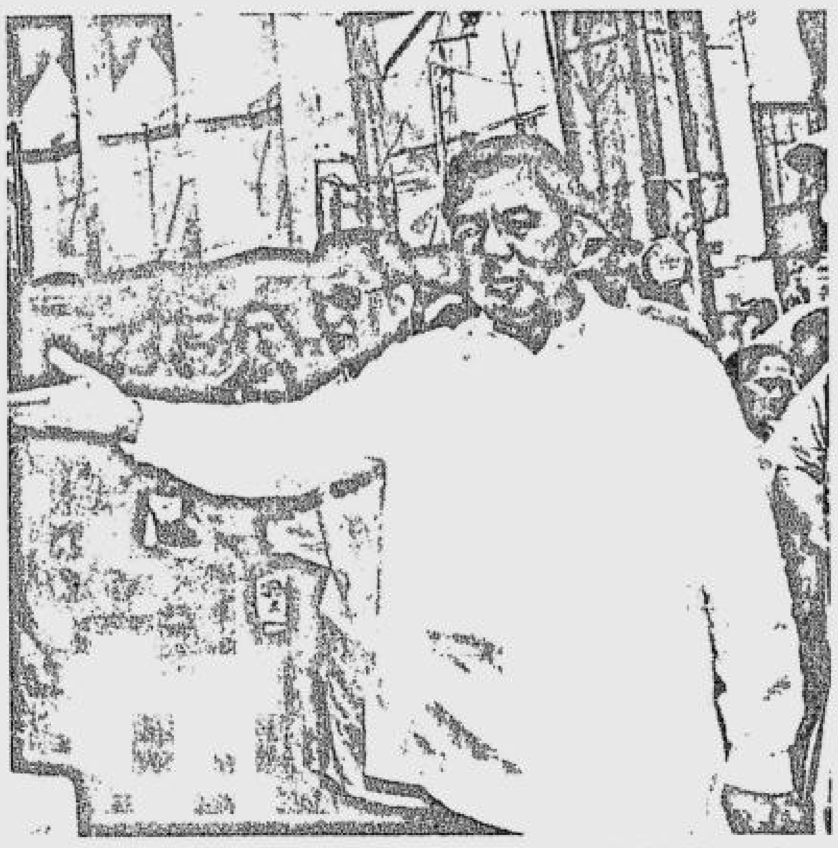
Marikina cannot handle Metro Manila's garbage

By Leila B. Salaverria



PROPER site for garbage dump continues to elude MMDA Chief Fernando

NEITHER Marikina, nor any other Metro Manila town or city would play host to the gargantuan garbage of Metro Manila.

This was announced yesterday by Metro Manila Development Authority Deputy Chair Cesar Lacuna to deny newspaper reports (not in the INQUIRER) that Marikina, which is governed by the wife of MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando, had offered the city as a temporary site for Metro Manila's trash while the search for a permanent landfill site is ongoing.

"That's not true," Lacuna said when asked about the matter. "Marikina could not handle the volume of garbage. No city or town in Metro Manila could handle the garbage of the whole metropolis."

Lacuna added that, if Marikina is used as a temporary dump, then the whole town would be awash in garbage.

Lacuna said Marikina has an area of 2,000 hectares, as big as Fernando's targeted site for the dump and waste processing facility he intends to build in Southern Luzon.

Milet Lorenzo, Public Information Officer of the Marikina government, also denied that the town has plans to host Metro Manila's garbage.

"The city will take care of its own garbage, nothing more," she said.

While negotiations for a 2,000-ha site in Quezon are ongoing, the MMDA is taking Metro Manila's trash to the Rodriguez landfill and to several controlled dumpsites in the metropolis, Lacuna bared.

The deputy chair added that the MMDA would be pursuing talks with Quezon officials and residents because of the need to find a permanent place for Metro Manila's garbage.

It was reported earlier in the week that Marikina, the country's shoe capital and which MMDA chair Bayani Fernando headed for nine years, would be taking in the garbage of other metro towns and cities.

The report quoted sources as saying Fernando negotiated for the purchase of a three-hectare property to be used as a dump and that the area of the dumpsite in Doña Petra Subdivision would be extended.

National Solid Waste Commission Executive Director Albert Magalang had claimed that a closure order has been issued for the Doña Petra dumpsite, but Marikina City officials allegedly refused to implement it. Magalang said that residents living near the dumpsite have complained of the stench.

Fernando however denied that such an order exists, adding the dumpsite is not illegal and has the proper permits.

Economics graduate school accepting applicants

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines School of Economics (UPSE) is now accepting applications to its graduate programs in economics for school year 2003-2004.

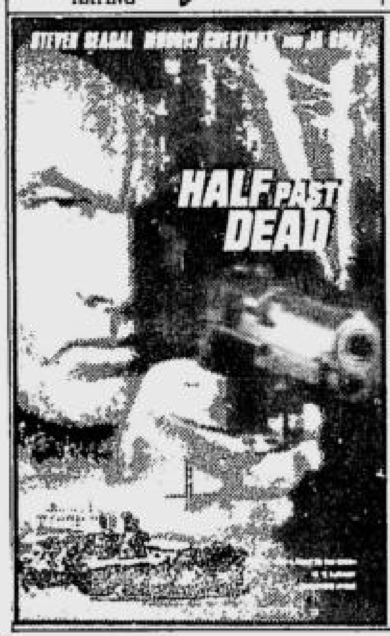
UPSE offers M.A. and Ph.D. in Economics with various fields of concentration. These programs do not require applicants to have economics as an undergraduate degree. Students with bachelor degrees in math, statistics, engineering, agricultural sciences and social sciences are encouraged to apply.

Fellowships are available to highly qualified students. The fellowship benefits include monthly stipends, tuition and other fees, and book allowance.

The deadline for submission of application and fellowship is January 10, 2003.

UPSE was designated the sole Centre of Excellence in Economics in the Philippines. UPSE is the only institution in the country with an active and internationally recognized PH.D. programme in economics; a high ratio of full-time faculty with Ph.D.; and a nationally unparalleled record of international publications in the discipline.

For inquiries and application forms, contact the Director for Graduate Admission and Fellowships, School of Economics, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, telephone numbers 9205460; 9279686-92.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The California Penal Authority has reopened Alcatraz, the most notorious prison in history. A disgruntled prison bureaucrat-turned-criminal mastermind heads a renegade commando team to infiltrate the high-tech fortress in order to force a death-row inmate to reveal the whereabouts of $200 million worth of gold.

Seagal teams with rap artist Ja Rule to rally the Alcatraz inmates to stop the invaders – before they murder the Supreme Court Justice, who is in The Rock to witness an execution.

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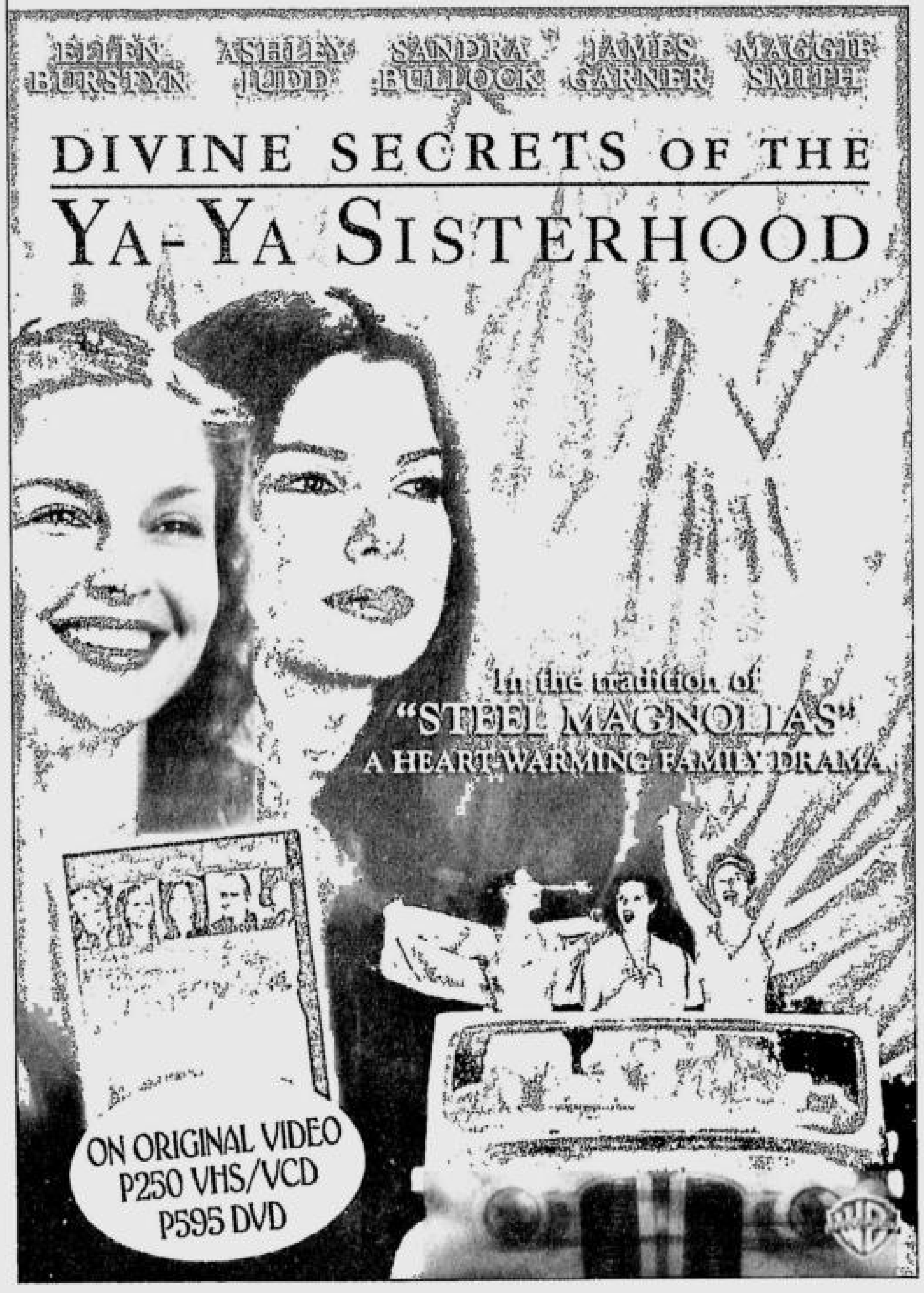
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Thera-FREE program for kids goes to Laguna

THE UP College of Allied Medical Professions Alumni Association, Therapy Center's Movement, and the Autism Center of CAHBRIBA Alternative School Foundation will hold a free therapy session on Jan. 18 at the Autism Center of CAHBRIBA in Los Baños, Laguna.

The program, called "Thera-FREE: Libreng Therapy para sa Pilipino," is open to children age two to 13 with autism, ADHD, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, speech defect and those with physical disabilities.

Screenings, which started last Dec. 12, are scheduled every Tuesday and Friday from 1 a.m. to 5 p.m. starting Dec. 12 at the Autism Center of CAHBRIBA. (Please bring the doctor's diagnosis of the patient).

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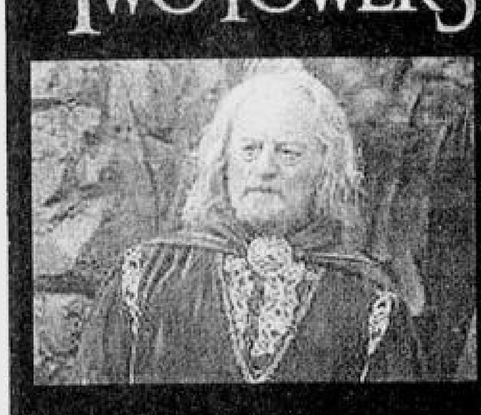

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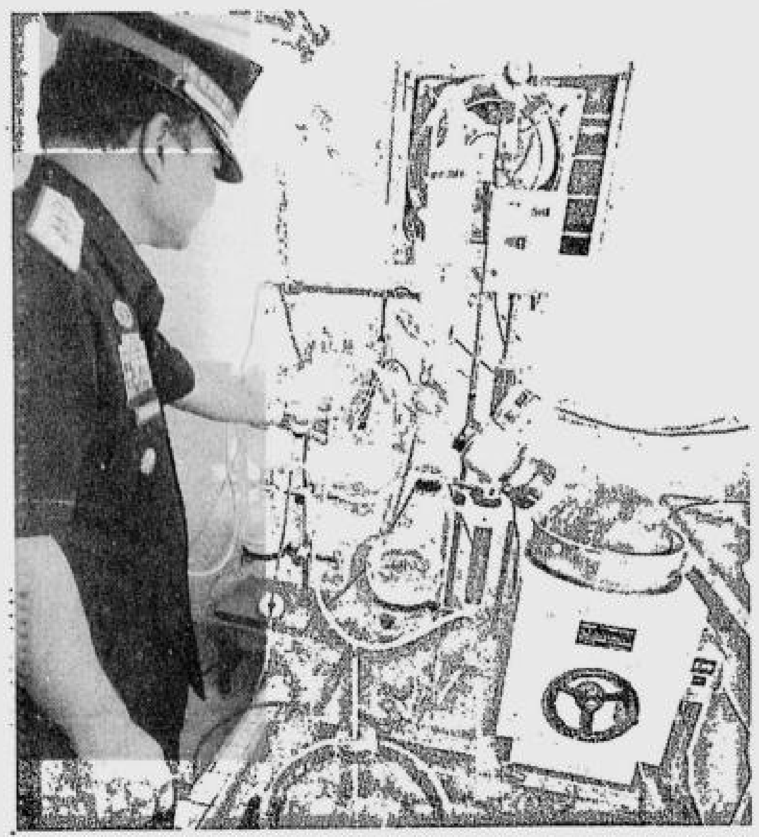
Where garbage, drugs, intrigues mix



A congested street named Malinis in Valenzuela proved to have kept the city's dirtiest secret: It was home to a drug laboratory with the biggest shabu stock ever found in the Philippines.

PDI PHOTO

By Tina Santos

THE CRIME-PRONE, garbage-infested areas of northern Metro Manila will probably be best remembered for more crimes and more stinking garbage topped by the usual political bickering in 2002.

A congested street named Malinis in Valenzuela proved to have kept the dirtiest secret: It was home to a drug laboratory with the biggest shabu stock ever found in the Philippines. It's worth P2.2 billion.

The laboratory, accidentally discovered after a small fire, alarmed the entire Philippine National Police hierarchy and prompted local authorities to look for more. Within a week, police raided a warehouse in Navotas where shabu ingredients for the Valenzuela laboratory were being kept.

Besides being areas occasionally jolted by brutal crimes, Valenzuela and Navotas, with their high-walled warehouses and congested neighborhoods, proved to be a good place for the manufacture of illegal drugs.

Hostage drama

YEARENDER

Before the raids, local police were preoccupied with one hostage-taking incident after another and the abduction of two scions of wealthy families in Valenzuela and Caloocan.

In August, 11-year-old girl Rachelle Valeriano was snatched by a drug-crazed ex-convict in Navotas.

But it seemed her rescuer, PO2 Edgardo de Guzman, learned very little from the Pasay incident three months earlier in which a 4-year-old hostage was killed, not by the taker, but by bungling rescuers. He, too, shot dead the girl in a brief but harrowing chase that ended at the sea.

There was another hostage incident in Malabon but the 11-year-old altar boy was rescued.

MALONZO

ERICE

ECHIVERRI

The abduction of dermatologist Charmaine Ong in Valenzuela and Danilo Bautista in Caloocan put to a test the government's confident pronouncements that kidnapping was a thing of the past.

A daughter of a wealthy Chinese-Filipino family, Ong was abducted by three armed men on the busy Mac Arthur Highway, where her family's CDO factory outlet was located. She was said to have escaped days later but there were reports that her family spent P50 million for her release.

An executive of Selecta Feeds belonging to the wealthy Arce clan, Bautista was abducted by heavily armed men near his office on Susana Road in North Caloocan. He was freed three days later while his takers and their mastermind quarreled over money.

Politics

Preparation for the 2004 elections came early in northern Manila particularly in Caloocan. Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo severed ties with long-time supporter Rep. Edgar Erice when he started grooming his wife Gigi as his successor. Erice joined the political opposition in denouncing the ex-actor's move as a work of a traditional politician. To Malonzo's critics, the mayor was no different from the Asistios, the clan whose domination of local politics he had so promisingly ended in 1995.

Malonzo and Erice's dispute worsened after the congressman revealed that the city government was already bankrupt due to the reckless and wasteful spending of the mayor's administration. The two even nearly clashed when Malonzo, challenged Erice into a martial arts fight, of which the mayor is known for.

An observer once remarked that politics had even gone to the dogs. He was not exactly mistaken.

In October, a million-peso sniffer dog, a 2-year old Belgian Mallinois, of the Caloocan City Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) bomb squad strayed from her leash. Though only one was missing, two dogs were found as Malonzo and Erice presented two different canines, each one claiming to be the missing one.

Malonzo and Rep. Enrico Echiverri had their share of spats in a number of occasions. The mayor had allegedly ordered the arrest of three men, said to be hired by the solon, for putting up "Christmas Greetings" streamers for Echiverri.

Even the Liga ng Barangay elections in the city was not spared the controversy as the three prominent political figures—Malonzo, Erice and Echiverri—fielded their own bets and fiercely fought for their candidates to win. Erice's bet, Roger Saraza won in the elections.

In September, Malabon City Mayor Amado Vicencio stepped down from his post to serve his 90-day suspension as ordered by the Sandiganbayan after he and four members of the city bidding committee were found guilty of graft charges—the anomalous awarding of the contract for the construction of the shelved P122-million new city hall project in Barangay Catmon—filed by opposition councilors Edilberto Torres and Chiqui Roque Villaroel.

Vice Mayor Allan Jay Yambao took over as the acting mayor. Vicencio returned to office on Dec. 5.

Land disputes

Caloocan City officials accused Malabon officials of substantially altering the 40-hectare Caloocan property in Libis, Baesa. But Malabon officials maintained that the area consisting of two barangays has always been a part of the city's territorial jurisdiction.

But Caloocan City officials are dead set in recovering the property. Congressman Echiverri recently revealed the Malabon officials conspired with members of the House Committee on Local Government to alter the territorial boundary of Caloocan and effectively transfer land to Malabon.

Caloocan's claim over the property was further strengthened after a court granted the city officials' petition for a writ of preliminary injunction.

On the other hand, the dispute between Carmel Development Inc. owned by businessman Gregorio "Greggy" Araneta and the Caloocan City government over the 156-hectare Pangarap Village continued to rage, which even resulted in clashes and claimed the lives of several residents who refused to leave the property despite the firm's promised relocation site for the affected families.

But the court ruled in favor of the firm allowing it to develop the property.

Malonzo would soon find himself engaging in a verbal tussle with former mayor Macario "Boy" Asistio over the Gotesco land scam. He blamed his predecessor for the alleged illegal transfer of the 22,685-square meter land on Rizal Avenue Extension where the Ever Gotesco Central Mall now stands.

Erap knee

But all these intrigues took a back seat when the Sandiganbayan allowed former President Joseph Estrada to take a bath at the Mother Ignacia Healing Center, a religious sanctuary in Bagumbong, Caloocan in December, in the hope of finding cure for his arthritic knee.

Thousands of people, including Estrada's family, supporters, security personnel and plain kibitzers trooped to the center on Dec. 19 to witness Estrada take a bath. He claimed to have felt better after the exercise.

The following day, hundreds of devotees, most of whom claimed to be admirers of the former actor and president, flocked to the religious sanctuary hoping to get the same relief.

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7	
Ali 1	SPIRIT WARRIORS
Ali 2	AGIMAT NI LOLO
Ali 3	MANO PO
Ali 4	LASTIKMAN
Ali 5	DEKADA '70
Ali 6	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
Ali 7	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS	
Farmers 1	LASTIKMAN
Farmers 2	AGIMAT NI LOLO
ARANETA COLISEUM	
JAN 11	ANAK LAUNCH
JAN 13 & 15	NCA 7 COCK DERBY
JAN 21, 22 & 24	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2003
ELEPHANT WORLD	
JAN. 4	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM
JAN. 5	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM
JAN. 7	1 PM / 3 PM / 5 PM

THEATER
MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	TWO TIMER/ SEX FILES
ODEON	LASTIKMAN
ODEON-2	PROSTI/ HIYAS NG PARAISO
ROBEN	SPIRIT WARRIORS
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	KILABOT AT KEMBOT/ RED DIARY
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET-2	AGIMAT NG LAWIN
QUEZON-1	LASTIKMAN
REMAR	LASTIKMAN
REMAR-2	AGIMAT
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	HOME ALONE DA RIBER
B	HULA MO, HULI KO
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA-2	REPLI-KATE
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	HULA MO, HULI KO
CINEMA-2	HOME ALONG DA RIBER
CINEMA-3	ALAMAT NG LAWIN
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	AGIMAT NI LOLO
CINEMA-6	MANO PO
CINEMA-7	SPIRIT WARRIOR 2
CINEMA-8	LAPU LAPU
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MANO PO
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	AGIMAT NI LOLO
CINEMA-12	SPIRIT WARRIOR 2
CINEMA-14	HOME ALONG DA RIBER
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LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	CHANGING LANES
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
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MANO PO GP 10:35, 1:10, 3:40, 6:20, 9:00	LASTIKMAN GP 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40	MANO PO GP 11:40, 2:20, 5:00, 7:40, 10:20

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Girl's body fished out of La Mesa

By Alcuin Papa

THE BODY of a nine-year old girl was found floating in the La Mesa Dam complex in Quezon City yesterday morning.

Police suspect that the victim was raped then killed, her body dumped into the dam.

The victim's body was fished out by security guard Fernando Mercado, police said.

Mercado was doing his rounds in the area at 10:45 a.m. when he saw the body floating in the dam, police said.

The girl's father positively identified the victim.

Investigators said the girl might have been raped. Police also found a large gash in the back of the victim's head, leading investigators to believe she was hit with a large blunt object causing her death.

The victim was reported missing last Dec. 14, police said.

Vendors vow to fight Fernando tooth and nail

By Leila Salaverria

AS THEIR New Year's resolution, sidewalk vendors and urban poor groups yesterday vowed to go head to head with Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando's intensification of his sidewalk clearing drive.

Pedring Fadrigon, president of the Metro Manila Vendors' Alliance, yesterday swore to escalate their call for Fernando's ouster because of his unbending stance that has adversely affected sidewalk vendors.

"If he will intensify his operations, we will intensify our rallies calling for his resignation," Fadrigon told the INQUIRER yesterday. "The sidewalk vendors are no longer hesitant to fight back. They are ready to give Bayani a fight he ought to have. If he views himself as a wild snake, the vendors view him only as a poor worm crawling under their boots."

He was reacting to Fernando's statement that for 2003, the MMDA would focus on projects that would make the roads more functional, chief of which is the controversial sidewalk clearing operations.

Fadrigon said more and more sectors of society are expressing their growing discontent with Fernando's projects, including the Church and residents of private subdivisions.

He cited Fr. Robert Reyes and Bishop Teodoro Bacani as among the clergy who have expressed alarm over Fernando's campaign.

Fernando had ordered MMDA personnel to confiscate and destroy illegal vendors' goods in order to exhaust their capital. He had also threatened to spray the wares with kerosene to render them useless.

Fadrigon also yesterday called on President Macapagal-Arroyo to remove Fernando from his post in order to validate her announcement not to run in the 2004 elections.

"GMA's announcement would be a pack of lies if she would not put a stop to the all-out war launched by the MMDA against the vendors," he said.

"We challenge her to sketch another bold move. Let Fernando pay the crime he successfully committed."

He added that Fernando should instead be put in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, where his alleged ruthlessness might be out to good use.

"Let's see him run after the rich," Fadrigon said.

No negotiations for renewal of oil depot permit

By Jerome Aning

THE MANILA city government is reviewing the compliance of the three oil firms using the Pandacan fuel depot to an agreement reducing their operations.

The compliance of Shell, Caltex and Petron is necessary for the re-issuance of their permits to operate for 2003, said Mayor Lito Atienza's spokesman Arman Sebastian.

Atienza said on Thursday that there would be no negotiations for the renewal of the permits unless the council amends a re-zoning ordinance that forbade the depot's continued operation in Pandacan.

"It is for the oil depot operators to negotiate with the city council for the amendment of the ordinance," the mayor said.

Sebastian said the three oil firms' prolonged stay at the depot would remain "technically legal" until a team created to monitor their compliance to the pact comes up with its report.

The body, which the mayor created last Sept. 20, is headed by City Administator Ernesto Dionisio.

Last month, the team reported that the oil firms are very slow in fulfilling their part in the June 26, 2002 memorandum of understanding, Atienza said.

Aside from Dionisio, the monitoring body also includes city engineer Magdiwang Recato, city electrician Ernesto Cuyugan, Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong and city fire marshal Pablito Cordeta.

Last year, a councilor and a non-government group sued the mayor before the Ombdusman and the Supreme Court for not implementing the ordinance and entering into a memorandum of agreement with the oil companies.

Under the MOU, Petron, Caltex and Shell agreed to reduce their operations by as much as 40 percent.

City Hall originally planned to shut down the depot but changed its mind when the oil firms warned of a possible fuel supply shortage and price hikes.

The MOU tasked the oil firms to dismantle 28 storage tanks that contain the most hazardous petroleum products such as aviation and liquefied petroleum gas.

The oil companies also agreed to set up a common depot and to create a "green" buffer zone around the facility to protect surrounding communities.

City Hall, in turn, extended the oil firms' permits to operate until Dec. 31 this year, during which they have to fulfill the MOU's provisions.

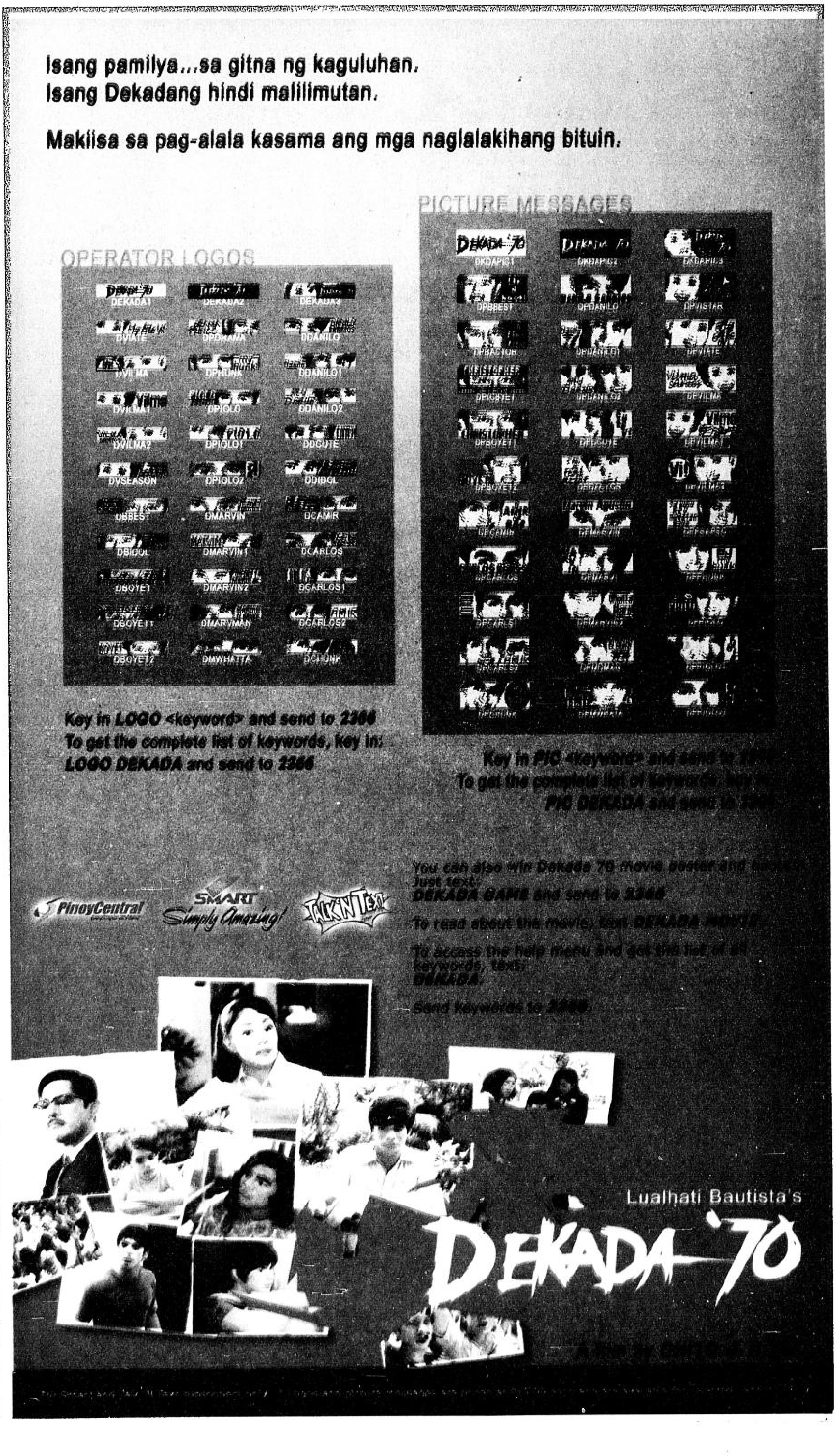
4 awards trigger fire department modernization

By Nelson Flores

PASIG City Mayor Soledad Eusebio yesterday vowed to speed up the modernization of the city's fire department in response to their winning four major awards in the recent Bureau of Fire Protection's Fire Service Recognition Day.

Soledad said she would help the local fire department modernize its fire fighting capability to show the city government's appreciation for a job well done.

The Pasig City Central Fire Station won four major awards, namely: Best Fire Station of the Year (for two consecutive years); Most Outstanding Senior Fire Officer of the year for Superintendent Aloveel Ferrer, Pasig City fire marshall; Best Senior Non-Officer Rank of the Year for SFO3 Herminigildo Cataluna Jr, and Best Junior Non-Officer Rank of the Year for FO3 Rodolfo Gonzales.



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Kobe, the gift, brings peace to his family

HIS father and mother never thought Kobe (right) would be a New Year baby

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE FIRST baby born in the New Year of 2002 at the University of Sto. Tomas Hospital is now a year old.

A giggly and bouncy Gaebriel Jakob R. Baustista grins from ear to ear, flashing his four cute incisors at various neighbors calling to greet him at the family home on Miguelin Street in Sampaloc.

"He has strong charisma," says his 23-year-old mother Regina. "He's so friendly that he goes and plays even with complete strangers."

Gaebriel is as outgoing as his 23-year-old father Jewel, always egging his parents or his grandmother, Bella Ruiz, 52, to take him to the neighbors or relatives very early in the morning.

The family wants him to stay home for security reasons. But can they resist him when he giggles in excitement? Or when his chubby, marshmallow-like arms rub against their cheeks?

So cute

"God, he's so cute," says Bella. "We can't wait for him to grow up."

The family would have been alarmed if the baby weighed less than his 11.5-kg frame. He's a voracious eater, devouring everything from milk and baby food to spaghetti, bread and Coke, according to his father.

"If other babies are still being forced to eat, ours is different. You have to find ways to stop him from eating," says Jewel.

Gaebriel, nicknamed Kobe, was born at exactly 9:16 a.m. at the UST hospital on Jan. 1, 2002. He weighed 7.6 lbs. He became an instant attraction for being the hospital's first born for 2002.

"When I woke up after six hours of labor, I heard nurses talking about my son," recalls Regina. "They were asking if the hospital management had a treat for him."

As it turned out, the Bautistas did not even get a discount. Kobe should have been born at 12:01 a.m. to qualify for that.

Pure luck

The father says he and his wife never intended Kobe to be a New Year baby. Regina thinks it was happenstance, pure luck or perhaps both.

Seven days earlier, on Christmas Day, Regina experienced excruciating pain and was rushed to the hospital. It was a false alarm. Had her doctors decided to give her a caesarian section then, Kobe would have been the family's Baby Jesus.

"Neither occasion would have been good for Kobe," Regina says jokingly. "Imagine, he would be receiving only one gift for his birthday and that occasion."

Kobe was conceived in April 2001 during a furtive, whirlwind four-month romance between Jewel and Regina.

The couple met in December 2000 while working at the Philamlife insurance firm in Makati. Love came quickly for the two but none of their officemates had the slightest hint of the romance. Neither did Regina's mother.

Jewel and Regina jolted their families when they suddenly eloped on Feb. 11, 2001 barely two months after their first date. Regina was already at the airport, set to leave for California that day when she decided to elope with Jewel. For the next four months, the couple hid out at a friend's house in Novaliches.

Bella then went to the Philamlife office and found out that an employee named Jewel Bautista was also missing. With a team of policemen, she stormed the young man's house in Pasay City. He was not there.

The couple surfaced in late April and met with Regina's mother to explain their disappearance and to tell her of their marriage plans. They were to marry on Dec. 8.

"I was shocked and fuming but what could I do?" says Bella. "I just let them be and prayed for their eternal happiness."

The grandmother came around when she was told that her daughter was expecting a baby boy. She would have wanted a girl. But she got so excited anyway that she immediately bought infant clothes and accessories and organized a baby shower for Regina on Dec. 15 in Antipolo.

"That's when I realized that babies build bridges and bring families together," says Bella.

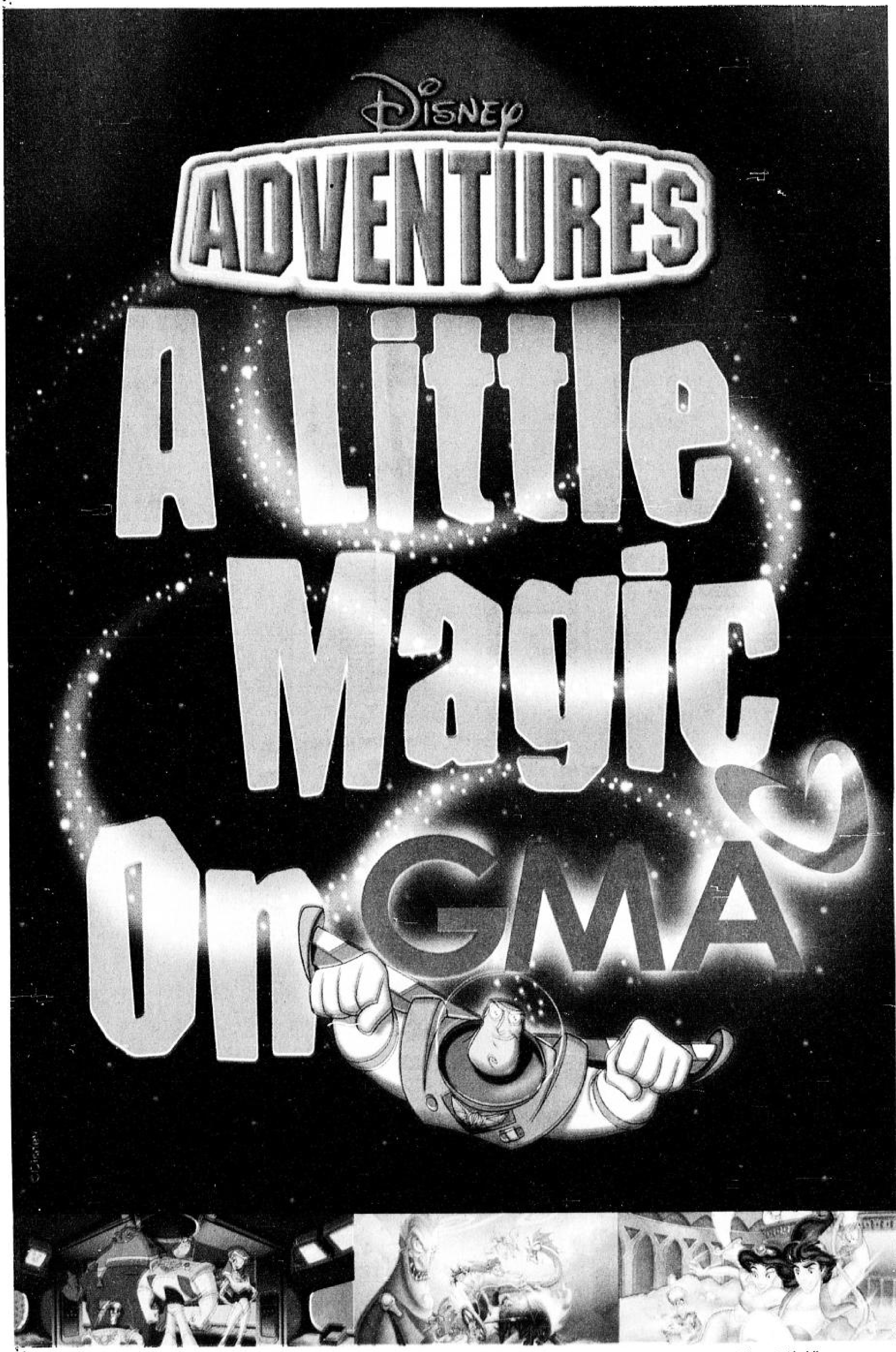
Regina says for all that she had to go through her pregnancy was surprisingly trouble-free. Carrying Kobe in the womb was no easy task for a petite young woman.

"I was barely 100 lbs but I ballooned to 150 lbs during my pregnancy. He was so big," says Regina.

The couple regularly went for strolls in the shopping malls so Regina could get much-needed exercise. She also recalls having craved for anything round—coconut, *puto seko*, egg—which probably explains Kobe's being plump and bouncy.

For the baby's first birthday celebration, the family held a small reunion at Bella's house on Constancia Street in Sampaloc.

But more than the celebration, Bella says the occasion was a humble thanksgiving for the gift that the family received that was Kobe.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Exports up 18% to $3.1B in November

Threats of US-Iraq war, possible oil price hike cloud economic prospects

By Doris C. Dumlao

MERCHANDISE exports resumed a double-digit growth in November, rising by 18 percent to $3.1 billion from $2.63 billion a year ago, after posting a mere 2.6 percent growth in October. This indicated that the country was on track to achieving its full-year export growth target of about 8 percent.

Analysts said this positive development showed that the export sector could still make a significant contribution to economic growth this new year.

However, a possible war in Iraq and higher oil prices will continue to cloud prospects for the economy, which is estimated to grow by about 4.2 percent to 5.2 percent this year.

The National Statistics Office yesterday said merchandise exports from January to November last year hit $32.153 billion, up by 9 percent from $29.505 billion in the same 11-month period in 2001.

The biggest dollar earner for November was still the electronic sector, which accounted for 55.9 percent of the country's total export earnings, followed by articles of apparel and clothing accessories with a share of 5.6 percent. Electronics exports rose by 22.4 percent in November from the year-ago level while articles of apparel and clothing accessories increased by 14.2 percent.

About 90.8 percent of the country's exports consisted of manufactured goods whose total earnings rose by 20.5 percent.

Export receipts from agro-based products such as bananas and coconut oil, while lower by 13.5 percent compared with the year-ago level, still accounted for 3.8 percent of total earnings.

Special transactions increased by 13.5 percent while receipts from exports of mineral products decreased by 39.2 percent.

The United States remained the country's biggest export market accounting for 21.4 percent of the total shipments during the period worth $664.59 million. The amount, however, was lower by 5.3 percent compared with year-ago level.

PHILIPPINE ports got busier in the last two months of 2002 as exports continued to pick up.

The slowdown in export receipts in October was attributed to the interrupted shipments of goods to the US due to the two-week strike by port workers in the West Coast last September. Analysts, however, said the slowdown in exports to the US was offset by the steadily improving shipments to Asian countries.

"The robust trend of regional exports continued with exports to China during the month up 47 percent; Hong Kong, 83 percent; South Korea, 26 percent; Taiwan, 14 percent, and Malaysia, 37 percent. We expect exports to the US to strengthen a bit in December as the impact of the strike wears off," said ATR Kim Eng Securities economist Luz Lorenzo.

Japan was the second biggest export destination with a 15.9-percent share. Exports to Japan went up by 42.7 percent to $493.67million in November.

Hong Kong accounted for

EXPORTS/ B2

ERC hit for decision on Meralco PPA recovery

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MILITANT consumer groups yesterday scored the Energy Regulatory Commission's decision allowing Manila Electric Co. to recover P5.76 billion in uncollected purchased power adjustment (PPAs) fees, saying this would pave the way for increases in Meralco's rates.

Bagong Alyansang Makabayan spokesperson Renato Reyes Jr. said in a telephone interview that the decision was unjust and that it legitimized Meralco's purchase of electricity at exorbitant prices from its sister companies.

Reyes said Meralco's PPA under-recoveries were the result of its purchases from First Gas Power Corp. and Quezon Power Philippines Ltd., which charged higher rates compared to those of the National Power Corp.'s.

The Lopez Group controls both Meralco and First Gas, which owns the 1,000-megawatt Sta. Rita and the 500-MW San Lorenzo plant in Batangas.

"Why allow Meralco to buy expensive supply from its sister companies?" Reyes said. "The Lopezes are clearly using the PPA mechanism to increase profits through the operations of its power plants."

"The Supreme Court has yet to decide on Meralco's overcharging and refund case, but here is the ERC allowing Meralco to again increase its PPA collections," Reyes said.

In a separate interview, ERC commissioner Mary Anne Colayco said the Dec. 19 decision was just saying that it was what the law provided.

Colayco said: "The ERC took time to study the case carefully. The decision came out eight months after it issued a cease-and-desist order to Meralco on April 30, 2002."

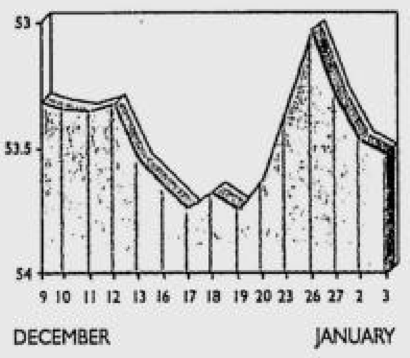
Besides, she said, the decision meant the consumers were spared from about P2 billion in additional PPA payments since the amount approved was lower by that much than what the utility had sought.

The five-page decision said that Meralco computed its PPA under-recoveries at P9.2 billion, but the ERC came up with only P7.3 billion.

Colayco further said that of the P7.3 billion, the ERC authorized Meralco to recover only P5.76 billion as it was still in disagreement over how the remaining P1.5 billion was computed.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 53.52 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 3, 2003

¥ 119.98 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 27, 2002

GOLD: $344.50 / 345.00

per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 3, 2003

Jan. 03, 2002

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	0.965065	1.000000	53.405000
Japan	Yen	0.008037	0.008328	0.444800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.539085	1.594800	85.170300
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.123751	0.128231	6.848200
Switzerland	Franc	0.688152	0.713063	38.081100
Canada	Dollar	0.615672	0.637959	34.070200
Singapore	Dollar	0.553522	0.573559	30.630900
Australia	Dollar	0.543148	0.562810	30.056900
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.560124	2.652801	141.672800
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.257344	0.266660	14.241000
Brunei	Dollar	0.555081	0.575175	30.717200
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000108	0.000112	0.006000
Thailand	Baht	0.022381	0.023191	1.238500
UAE	Dirham	0.262781	0.272294	14.541900
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.036200	55.338300
Argentina	Peso	0.287222	0.297619	15.894300
Brazil	Real	0.273080	0.282965	15.111700
Denmark	Kroner	0.134695	0.139571	7.453800
India	Rupee	0.020126	0.020855	1.113800
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.253998	0.263193	14.055800
Mexico	New Peso	0.093036	0.096404	5.148500
New Zealand	Dollar	0.504451	0.522712	27.915400
Norway	Kroner	0.137707	0.142692	7.620500
Pakistan	Rupee	0.016630	0.017232	0.920300
South Africa	Rand	0.113823	0.117943	6.298700
Korea	Won	0.000813	0.000842	0.045000
Sweden	Kroner	0.109642	0.113611	6.067400
Syria	Pound	0.018739	0.019417	1.037000
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.027859	0.028868	1.541700
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000694	0.000719	0.038400

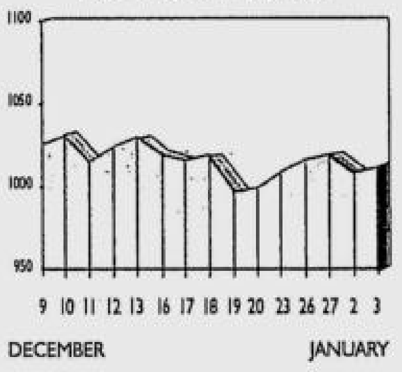
STOCK MARKET

Stocks end up, track Wall Street rally

STOCKS led by utility firm Meralco ended slightly higher yesterday as investors tracked the overnight rally on Wall Street but analysts said lingering worries over Iraq limited the gains.

"The Wall Street rally may have urged some buying but most market aficionados are still away on an extended Christmas holiday," said Asiasec Equities research head Oliver Plana.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

The main index gained 2.86 points or 0.28 percent to close at 1,011.50 points, on the back of a 3.19-percent surge in the Dow Jones industrial average overnight due to a surprise pickup in US manufacturing activity.

The Philippine stock market's value turnover yesterday rose to P481.03 million from Thursday's P113.64 million, but the increase in volume came mainly from cross transactions.

Manila Electric Co's (Meralco) B shares, which are open to foreigners, jumped 11.11 percent or P1 to close at P10 on news that it had been allowed to collect up to P7.3 billion from customers in deferred electricity charges.

Meralco A shares, which is restricted to Filipinos, gained 6.02 percent or 50 centavos to end at P8.80.

The government's Energy Regulatory Commission effectively scrapped an April order which restrained Meralco from implementing the deferred power purchase adjustments, a mechanism to pass on some distribution costs to its 3.8 million customers.

While lower than the 9.2 billion in deferred charges the company had been seeking, the decision should help the cash flow of the debt-laden firm, analysts said.

In the broader market, losers and gainers were tied at 18 and 24 stocks were unchanged.

Reuters

Inflation seen declining

THE COUNTRY'S inflation rate will decline for the third consecutive month in December as consumer demand weakened further, a poll of economists showed.

But the central bank will not be inclined to ease monetary policy to spur economic activity, given expectations of stronger inflationary pressures from rising global oil prices, the economists said.

• The volatility of the peso should also check any temptation to cut rates, they said.

A Reuters poll of 10 economists forecast on average a 2.42 percent year-on-year rise in December, down from November's 2.5 percent, which was the lowest since June 1987.

The estimates ranged from 2.2 percent to 2.5 percent, as economists generally agreed inflation continued to be benign.

The government, due to release the data on Jan. 6, has projected the annual rate of inflation for 2002 at 3.2 percent.

Inflation has been below 3 percent since July 2002.

"Holiday spending was slower in December 2002 compared with the previous year, which was a reflection of weaker consumer confidence, hence, low inflation growth," said AB Capital analyst Jose Vistan.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura earlier said December inflation was expected to be between 2.1 and 2.4 percent, due to low food prices and a stable peso.

David Cohen, director of macroeconomic analysis at MMS International, said the onset of the dry spell in the fourth quarter of 2002 hardly affected food prices.

Economists, however, expect inflation to creep higher this year for the Philippines—which imports all of its crude oil—due to a threat of war in Iraq.

The government had earlier projected average annual inflation for 2003 to tick higher to 4.5 to 5.5 percent.

Reuters

Farmers allowed to import rice in Q1

THE GOVERNMENT has allowed farmers and private firms to import up to 225,000 tons of rice in the first quarter, dismantling the monopoly of the National Food Authority (NFA), the country's sole importer of rice since 1983.

"They can start negotiating now. These (shipments) should arrive no later than March 31," Gregorio Tan, deputy administrator of state trading firm NFA, said yesterday.

President Macapagal-Arroyo previously announced that the government would allow farmers' groups and private firms to import rice this year.

The Philippines is one of Asia's largest rice importers. It bought 1.14 million tons mostly from India, Thailand and Vietnam last year.

However, the National Confederation of Irrigators Association earlier claimed that despite the government's promise to allow farmers' groups to import rice, the NFA had virtually restricted them from participating in rice importation.

The NFA's Letter Circular Number AO-2K2-12-001 dated Dec. 13, 2002 has made impossible for the farmers' group to participate in rice importation, said Silvestre Bonto, spokesperson of NCIA.

Reuters

Business As Usual with PLDT

PLDT subscribers need not be bothered with the labor strike the company is presently experiencing. They will continue to receive quality service from the nation's leading telephone service company. PLDT assures its clients that they will continue on serving them in all aspects of operations.

The following establishments are ready to serve them to accept payments, receive applications and handle all customer inquiries:

- Over 3,000 accredited PLDT payment channels in 23 banking institutions nationwide (Metrobank, UCPB, Equitable-PCI Bank, RCBC, BPI, Unionbank, Chinabank Security Bank, 1st E Bank, Insular Savings Bank, Malayan Bank, Banco de Oro, Robinsons Bank, Bank of Commerce, Country Bank, United Overseas Bank Philippines, Planters Bank, East West Bank, Keppel Bank, Asiatrust Bank, Philippine National Bank, Development Bank of the Philippines, RCBC Savings Bank & Union Bank of the Philippines)
- BPI Phone Banking
- Citibank, AIG, Equitable & Union Bank Lumina Credit Cards
- All Megalink and Bancnet ATMs
- Over 140 CIS Bayad Centers in Metro Manila & Luzon
- 25 SM Department Stores and Supermarkets nationwide
- PLDT Business Offices in SM Manila, SM Megamall, SM City and SM Centerpoint

PLDT assures, that despite this temporary inconvenience, serving our loyal subscribers remains to be our top priority.

ADVT

ERC closes Meralco hearings; ₱1.12/kwh rates hike looms

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission has wrapped up hearings on distribution giant Manila Electric Co.'s petition to "unbundle" its rates.

If the commission decides in Meralco's favor, consumers will see an additional P1.12 per kilowatt-hour in their electric bills.

ERC Commissioner Mary Anne Colayco said in an interview that the ERC held its last hearing on Meralco's petition on Dec. 19, when the last of the witnesses was presented.

The ERC will decide once Meralco and those opposing the petition submit their remaining documents.

"The final step is the formal offer of exhibits from both parties, when they will submit all documents pertinent to the case," Colayco told the INQUIRER.

Meralco is asking an average increase of P1.12 per kWh.

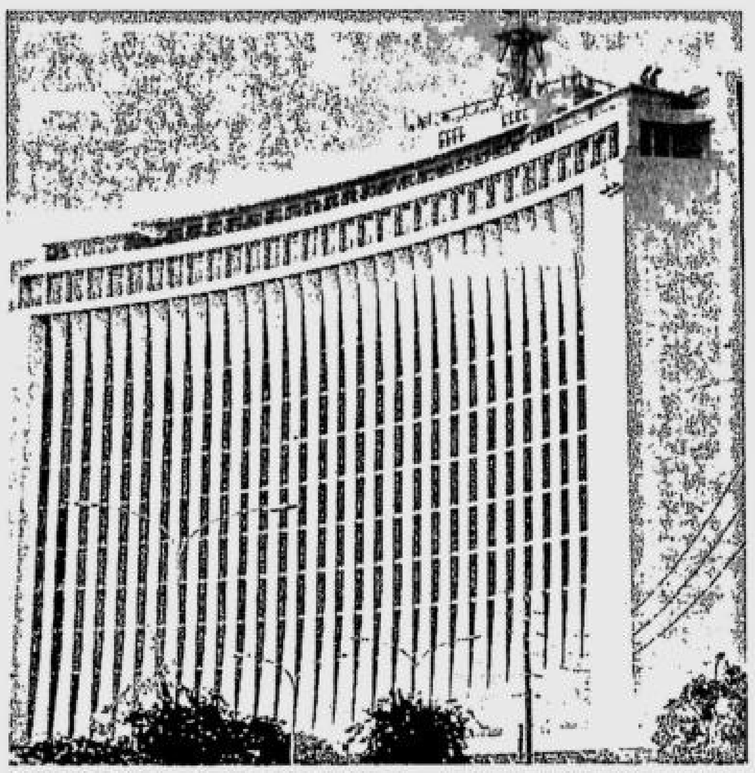
"The ERC issued (last month) its first decisions on the electric cooperatives' applications, and we are hoping we could do the same for big distributors," Colayco said.

The commission held about 30 hearings on Meralco's petition starting on March 11 last year.

These hearings saw in action two former senators—Wigberto Tañada, who is counseling for Meralco, and Juan Ponce Enrile, a witness for the opposition.

Rachel Pastores, counsel for cause-oriented groups Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and Bayan Muna, which are opposing Meralco's petition, said the ERC had yet to issue an order for the formal offer of exhibit, as there were still motions that were pending.

"From the day the order is issued, the offer of exhibit would take more or less a month since both parties are given the chance to respond to each other's exhibits," Pastores explained.



MERALCO'S head office. The utility firm is seeking a P1.12 per kilowatt-hour increase in its rates.

Union Cement eases debt burden, retires ₱950M

By Doris C. Dumlao

UNION Cement Corp., the country's biggest cement producer, has retired some P950 million worth of long-term commercial papers that fell due last month.

Even before it merged with affiliate Alsons Cement Corp., Union Cement was already planning to retire at least P1.5 billion in debts last year to trim its debts to P1.7 billion.

In a disclosure sent to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Union Cement senior vice president Eduardo Sahagun said Union Cement retired four series of LTCPs last month.

The bulk of these debt instruments—worth about P400 million—were paid on Dec. 20. The remaining three series were retired on Dec. 23.

The debt reduction program is in line with Union Cement's efforts to boost its competitive footing, particularly in view of the entry of imported cement into the local market.

Union Cement recently merged with Alsons Cement through a share-swap deal, issuing a new share for every 3.7 shares of Alsons Cement.

The consolidation was meant to solidify the group's lead over local and foreign competitors, especially with the merger of Blue Circle Plc. of the United Kingdom and Lafarge SA of France.

Union Cement is majority owned by Union Cement Holdings Corp., a joint venture between Europe-based cement giant Holcim and local firm Bacnotan Consolidated Industries Inc.

With three cement plants in La Union, Bulacan and Davao City, Union Cement has a total cement capacity of 5.5 million tons a year and a market share of about 22 percent.

Union Cement was formed two years ago following the merger of Hi Cement Corp., Davao Union Cement Corp. and Bacnotan Cement Corp. It is one of several companies managed by Philippine Investment-Management Inc.

Alsons Cement, on the other hand, has two cement plants in northern Mindanao with a combined annual capacity of 1.4 million metric tons.

It accounted for 11 percent of the local cement industry's capacity.

Alsons Cement was part of the Alcantara group of companies, which also has interests in power, property, gas distribution and plywood businesses.

Reynolds reiterates appeal for tariff cover to protect local aluminum firms

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

REYNOLDS Philippines Corp. is insisting on its petition to maintain the tariff cover on aluminum products even though the bankrupt firm's factory has been idle since December 2000.

In a letter to Board of Investments Governor Tomas Aquino, Reynolds president and chief executive Jaime Gonzales underscored what he saw as a pressing need to protect his company and the aluminum industry as a whole.

Gonzales said Reynolds had been forced to shut down its aluminum plant because of continuing losses that the company incurred following the hasty reduction in tariff committed by the government to its treaty countries.

He also blamed the unabated entry of cheap imports under dubious circumstances for his company's misfortunes.

"We are presently in negotiations with foreign investors who require the restoration of tariff protection similar to the commitment of the government to investors of National Steel Corp. and similar companies," Gonzales said in his letter.

Reynolds is basically in the same boat as the NSC, which was forced to close down in November 1999 due to losses and rising debt expenses.

The NSC's majority shareholders recently reached a deal with bankers, through the intermediation of the government, which promised tariff protection on steel products to attract investor interest to the company.

Mounting debts and losses forced its former majority owner, Profinda Holdings Corp., to strike a deal with creditors that allowed it to repay its debts over a seven-year period.

State-owned Land Bank of the Philippines is currently Reynolds' single biggest creditor and stockholder after it approved the restructuring of the company's P2.4-billion debt last year.

Reynolds is the country's largest aluminum maker, producing 20,000 metric tons annually at its plant in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

EDEZA: Rates tend to go down.

Treasurer sees lower T-bill rates

NATIONAL Treasurer Sergio Edeza said yesterday he expected the yields on the benchmark 91-day treasury bill to slow down some more in the first quarter of the year, citing a very liquid financial system.

Edeza said the average 91-day T-bill rate would likely soften by another 20 basis points this quarter, beginning with a drop of 5 to 10 basis points on Monday, the year's first auction day.

The 91-day T-bill rate averaged 5.193 percent during the last auction on Dec. 9, 2.9 basis points lower than the rate in previous auctions.

"Normally in the first quarter, the bias is for the rates to go down because of liquidity," Edeza said.

He said there was a bigger domestic borrowing program for the first quarter because the government was trying to build up cash.

2001 financial data of firms earning at least ₱10M out on the Net by Jan. 31

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission announced yesterday that it would post on the Internet last year's financial data of companies earning at least P10 million by the end of the month.

In an interview, SEC Chair Lilia Bautista said the service—initially free of charge—would allow the public to view summaries of the 2001 financial statements of companies with gross revenues of at least P10 million at the SEC's website.

"Right now, we are looking to protect that data so we can be sure of its integrity (before offering it online)," Bautista told reporters.

All 2001 data have already been digitized for the Internet, but the SEC's program is to cover all corporate reports from 1995.

At present, those who wish to look over and get copies of the financial data of companies must personally go to the SEC's office.

The new service will be temporary, while the SEC's "iReport"—the second phase of a multimillion-peso computerization project—is being investigated by Congress, Bautista said.

Parañaque Rep. Ed Zialcita has questioned the SEC's computerization project.

The SEC has assured Zialcita that it will not use its budget to finance the project until the investigation is completed.

i-Report was designed to allow online submission of reports and decentralized access to corporate documents filed with the SEC through Internet-based imaging and retrieval.

The SEC computer project's first phase, "iRegister," has already been implemented, allowing the public to view, verify and reserve company names and submit for approval the registration of a company, partnership or non-profit organization.

The SEC's new computer system was structured by Sun Microsystems Philippines Inc. in partnership with 25*8, a digital solutions provider.

iRegister was the first in a series of computerization projects that the SEC was to undertake for P165 million.

In the SEC's pipeline are an online transaction processing system, an online analytical processing system and a decision support system.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Friday, January 3, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	18	18	17.75	18	4,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	34	34	33.5	34	1,707,000
China Banking Corp.	620	630	620	630	490
Citystate Savings Bank	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	26.5	26.5	26	26	20,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	31	31.5	30.5	31	111,500
Philippine National Bank	23.75	23.75	23.75	23.75	30,200
Phil. Savings Bank	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	10,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	17	17.25	17	17.25	19,200
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1150	1150	1150	1150	60
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	10,000
Sun Life Financial Serv.	870	905	870	905	410
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	16.5	16.5	16	16	45,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	560,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	447.5	447.5	447.5	447.5	11,800
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	1,100,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	61,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	267.5	270	265	270	80,680
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	15,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	8.9	8.9	8.5	8.8	387,000
Manila Electric Co. B	9.2	10.25	9.2	10	4,430,000
Petron Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	2,203,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0 98	0 98	0.98	0.98	50,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.42	1.36	1.42	966,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.42	2.46	2.42	2.46	101,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.14	2.14	13,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	18.25	18.25	17.75	18	2,937,800
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	35	35	34.5	35	3,681,800
San Miguel Corp. A	59	59	59	59	52,200
San Miguel Corp. B	65	65	64.5	65	358,400
Universal Robina Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.7	2.7	3,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	1,540,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.3	2.34	2.3	2.34	424,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	1,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	5,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.12	0.14	0.12	0.14	16,440,000
First Phil Hldgs. Corp.	8.4	9	8.4	9	1,111,000
Ionics Inc.	0.75	0.76	0.75	0.76	30,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.56	0.57	1,200,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.165	2,050,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	700,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	65,000
Jardine Davies Inc.	17	17	17	17	1,000
Pryce Corp.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	3,000,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	11.5	11.5	11.25	11.25	7,500
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	15.75	16	15.5	15.5	2,205,200
Jollibee Warrants	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	26,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10	10	10	10	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	5,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.55	4.55	4.45	4.45	4,497,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	290,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.84	0.84	0.83	0.83	380,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	1.96	1.98	1.96	1.96	120,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4.65	4 65	4.4	4.4	12,071,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	50,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	230,000
OIL					
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	10,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,915,860	64,087,875.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	62,087,180	342,849,340.00
PRO	17,358,000	74,446,600.00
Mining	280,000	115,400.00
OIL	10,000	1,500.00
GRAND TOTALS :	81,651,040	481,500,715.00

AVERAGES		
Bank & Fin Svc	369 67	UP 1.22
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,467.85	UP 11.04
PRO	399.10	DOWN 9.47
Mining	1,186.39	DOWN 5.29
OIL	1.02	DOWN 0.01
All Shares Index	607.71	UP 1.29
Composite	1,011.50	UP 2.86

NO. OF ADVANCES: 18; NO. OF DECLINES: 18; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 24; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 60; NO. OF TRADES: 1,472

DISCLOSURES

WILLIAM, Gothong & Aboitiz Inc. has reduced the total number of shares it has approved for listing by 48 redeemable preferred shares representing the fractional shares dropped from its books. The listing of 364,520,487 redeemable preferred shares is set for Jan. 7.

* * *

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. has said 208 common shares have been availed of and fully paid for under its tandem stock purchase and option plan. The listing is set for Jan. 6. This brings the number of common shares listed under the plan to 11,087,948.

* * *

ABS-CBN Holdings Corp. has said its Philippine Depository Receipt agent has received notices from its shareholders for the exchange of 130,000 ABS-CBN common shares to 130,000 PDRs. The listing is set for Jan. 6. This brings the number of PDRs listed arising from the exchange to a total of 269,540,900 PDRs.

* * *

MANULIFE Financial Corp. has provided the Philippine Stock Exchange with a copy of the offering documents relating to its offer to acquire all the outstanding common shares of **Canada Life Financial Corp.**, which it has filed with the Toronto Stock Exchange.

* * *

THE **PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co.** has said very few members of its employees union has gone on strike. It also confirmed that the Department of Labor and Employment has initiated further conciliation meetings between the company and the union to amicably settle the dispute. Also, it has denied reports that it has been blocking **PT&T** traffic, adding that there is no truth to reports that it owes PT&T toll settlement claims.

* * *

THE ARTICLES of merger and plan of merger of **House of Investments Inc.** as the surviving corporation and **Hi-Daiwa House Philippines Inc.**, **House of Investment Realty Corp.**, **Zamboanga Gold Mining Corp.**, **Zamboanga Wood Products Inc.**, **Satellite Properties Estate Corp.**, **Isuzu Manila Inc.**, and **Honda Cars Quezon City Inc.** as the absorbed corporations were approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission on Dec. 27.

* * *

LA TONDEÑA Distillers Inc., in line with its repurchase program, bought 30,000 shares on Jan. 2.

* * *

INTERPHIL Laboratories Inc. has bought 397,000 ILI shares and 50,000 ILIB shares on Jan. 2 as part of its shares buyback program.

* * *

QUEEN Bee Resources Corp. has bought 145,052 **Jollibee Foods Corp.** shares on Jan. 2 as part of the bonus warrants to be issued to all warrantholders as of Dec. 13. This completes the underlying common shares of the bonus warrants. QRC purchased a total of 3,246,554 JFC shares for this purpose.

* * *

BEGINNING Jan. 2, **Robinsons Land Corp.** shall use new stocks certificates reflecting the declassified shares and other updated capital structure information. ***Compiled by Armin Adina, PDI Research***

Exports up 18% to $3.1B in November

From page B1

$266.33 million or 8.6 percent of the total receipts. The other top markets were: Netherlands, ($234.11 million); Taiwan, ($223.19 million); Singapore, ($185.81 million); Germany, ($173.49 million); Malaysia, ($151.34 million); Republic of Korea, ($138.37 million); and People's Republic of China, ($123.51 million).

"For 2003, we expect exports to be one of the drivers of economic growth. We forecast export growth to be in the 10-15 percent range with the expected strengthening in the US economy and Europe, as well as continued healthy growth in neighboring countries. A competitively priced peso is also likely to support robust export growth," Lorenzo said.

Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief strategist Jonathan Ravelas said: "The recovery process seems to be underway and the balance of probabilities suggests that economic conditions will remain promising in 2003. However, the looming war and our own domestic problems provide a reason for caution in the year ahead."

Some economists were wary of being too optimistic, as the economic slowdown in the US would continue to drag exports.

The outlook for the first quarter may also be clouded by the anticipated impact of the El Niño drought pattern on crops and the threat of war in Iraq.

"The chances are strong for the US to go to war, and the uncertainties would affect demand and negatively impact on exports," AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan said. ***With a report from Reuters***

PRULINK PRU LIFE U.K.

VARIABLE LIFE	Current Week December 31, 2002	Last Week December 24, 2002
Prulink Bond Fund	1.03517	1.03416
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* Note: This supersedes prices published January 3 2003

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People, Events & Products
Aries Espinosa, Editor
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Metro Manila Filmfest at SM Cinema

SM CINEMA celebrated the recent 28th Metro Manila Film Festival in a big way. There were the traditional star-studded Gala Premieres and Meet and Greet sessions at SM Megamall, SM City North-Edsa, and The Podium, but the filmfest also made waves in the provincial areas.

Fans in the Visayas and Mindanao, for example, had a chance not only to see the movies at the same time, but also enjoy a Parade of Stars at SM City Cebu and SM City Davao.

Reeling of the excitement was the Gala Premiere of Regal Films' *Mano Po*, at the SM Megamall cinema. The theme of the movie, which won the Best Picture award, was family, and many of the stars made the premiere night a family affair.

Kris Aquino, who later won the Best Supporting Actress award, came with mom, former President Cory Aquino; while Richard Gomes was not only accompanied by wife Lucy, but also by in-laws Manoling and Julie Torres. Tirso Cruz III came with wife Lyn and kids TJ, Bodie, and Djanin; while Quezon City Congressman Chuch Mathay attended the preem with wife Nerissa and kids Macky, Cris, and Nicole.

Mano Po's award-winning team: Eddie Garcia (Best Actor), Ara Mina (Best Actress), and Joel Lamangan (Best Director) were also at the SM Megamall preem, as were producer Mother Lily Monteverde, Boots Anson-Roa, and Armida Siguion-Reyna.

The festival's top grosser, Imus Productions' *Ang Agimat (Anting Anting ni Lolo)* also had its preem at SM Megamall. Bong Revilla, who topbills the movie, showed fans not only his star quality, but also his big heart, when he treated 500 children from the Hospicio de San Jose to the preem and some snacks.

The Podium Cinema, on the other hand, played host to the King of Comedy during the Gala Premier of RVQ Productions' Home Alone Da Riber. Dolphy made a rare appearance together with son Eric, Eddie Gutierrez, and son Elvis.

There was also a lot of star action at SM City North-Edsa, during the preem of *Hula Mo, Huli Ko*. Rudy Fernandez graced the event, as did Rufa Mae Quinto, Jenine Desiderio, Carlos Morales, and Patrick de la Rosa.

Not to be outdone, movie enthusiasts in Cebu and Davao were also treated to a Parade of Stars at the SM malls in those areas.

Fans packed SM City Davao, which was the kick off point for this exciting parade. The *Agimat* float with Bong Revilla and Nancy Castiglione was made in cooperation with SM City Davao and won the Best Float award. Others in the parade included the King, Fernando Poe Jr. in the *Ang Alamat ng Lawin* float; Dolphy and Jolina Magdangal in the Home Alone Da Riber float; Rudy Fernandez, Rufa Mae Quinto, and Carlos Morales in the *Hula Mo, Huli Ko* float; and Joyce Jimenez and Mark Lapid in the *Lapu Lapu* float.

Fans likewise trooped to SM City Cebu to watch the Festival of Stars' culminating activity. They were thrilled to see Home Alone Da Riber's Dolphy and son Vandolph; *Lapu Lapu*'s Governor Lito Lapid, Mark Lapid, Joyce Jimenez and Vic Vargas; and *Mano Po*'s Ara Mina.

Also joining them were *Hula Mo, Huli Ko*'s Rudy Fernandez, Rufa Mae Quinto, and Carlos Morales; Spirit Warrior's Spencer Reyes, Danilo Barrios and Vhong Navarro; *Dekada* 70's Marvin Agustin and Dimples Romano; and Lastikman's Oyo Boy Sotto and Anne Curtis.

The 2002 Metro Manila Film Festival in ongoing at all SM Cinemas until Jan. 10.

THE KING of Philippine Cinema Fernando Poe Jr. waves to the crowds from the '*Ang Alamat ng Lawin*' float at the SM City Davao.

RAMON 'Bong' Revilla Jr. at the Gala Premier of '*Ang Agima (Anting Anting ni Lolo)*' at the SM Megamall Cinema.

FORMER President Cory Aquino shows her support for her daughter Kris Aquino at the '*Mano Po*' Gala Premiere at the SM Megamall cinema.

HOME Alone Da Riber's Dolphy with Eddie Gutierrez and son Elvis at the Podium cineplex.

LAPU LAPU'S Governor Lito Lapid at the Parade of Stars at SM City Cebu.

Jehovah's Witnesses holding series of conventions

JEHOVAH'S Witnesses is currently holding 63 conventions in 52 cities in the country. The series of conventions started Dec. 13.

With this year's theme "Zealous Kingdom Proclaimers," delegates from Metro Manila gather at their assembly hall in Novaliches, Quezon City every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from December 2002 to January 2003.

There were programs for the deaf who understand sign language, in conjunction with the English session, Dec. 20 to 22. The annual three-day convention consisted of discourses, lively discussions, true-to-life skits, reenactments, personal experiences, and a Bible drama.

The program was principally held in Cebuano, Iloko, and Tagalog, Bicol, English, Hiligaynon, Pangasinan, Philippine Sign Language, and Samar-Leyte.

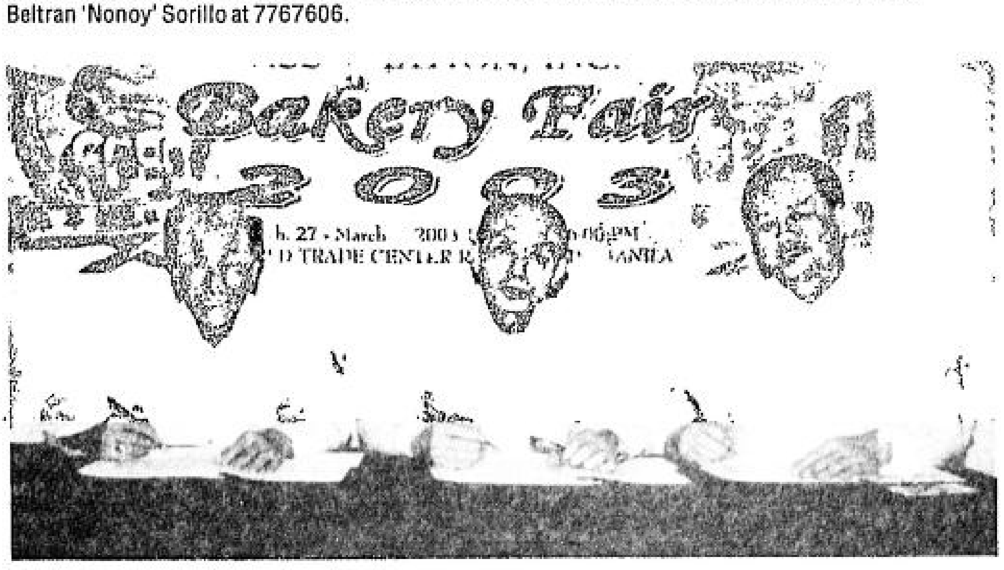
Geoffrey Guevarra, who oversees the English and Sign Language convention, stressed that the annual event is not for Witnesses only.

"We invite the public to attend the convention with us. People will not only benefit from Bible-based discussions and practical advice but also learn quite a bit about what moves us to their doors," he said.

All convention sessions are open to the public. Admission is free. For more information on Jehovah's Witnesses, log on to its official web site www.jw_media.org.

ANDREANS VISIT TALA

Andreans Batch '78 visited Fr. Paul at the Our Lady of Holy Rosary Parish Church, Tala, Caloocan City Dec. 23, 2002, to hand over the donations given by batch mates here and abroad. Miss Pompa, assistant principal, witnessed the turnover of donations by Samuel Lim, together with Edgar Littaua, Glen Gocco, Dante Garces, Rodolfo Lunas and Michael Fernandez. There will be a meeting and campus tour today at 3 p.m. in preparation for the grand reunion of Batch 78. For more information call Beltran 'Nonoy' Sorillo at 7767606.



FCBAI STAGES BAKERY FAIR 2003

The Filipino-Chinese Bakery Association Inc. (FCBAI) will hold its second year of staging Bakery Fair 2003 at the World Trade Center on Feb. 27 to March 1. It will be highlighted by the presence of numerous key people in the industry who are willing to share their endeavors and expertise. Photo shows (from left) Ching Suy Eh of Island Biscuit Inc., FCBAI president Pancrasio Tan and FCBAI corporate secretary Marcos Ong Jr., participants in the upcoming Bakery Fair 2003. For more information call phone nos. 254-2518 or 254-2526.

St. Scho Manila homecoming Feb. 9

THE HIGH School Class of 1978 invites all alumni of St. Scholastica's College Manila to the Annual Homecoming festivities on Sunday, Feb. 9. Registration is at 2 p.m. at the school grounds. Alumni of high school and college classes of 1973, 1968, 1963, 1958, 1953, 1948, 1938, 1933 and 1928 are requested to pre-register now with the Alumni Office at 524-1559 or 524-7686. High school and college Jubilarians who graduated in 1978 can call this year's chair Sandie Romulo-Squillantini at 818-4202, (0917) 895-8429 or email rrrsquil@itextron.com.

Alcatel wins 'best of tests' award

THE ALCATEL 4980 Softphone has won the distinguished 2002 Best of the Tests Award in Network World's 4th annual Signature Series Best Issue published in November. The Alcatel 4980 Softphone is an application that enables road warriors and home workers to use their computer as a telephone to access the Alcatel OmniPCX 4400 IP-PBX's corporate telephony features from virtually anywhere in the world.

Over the past 12 months, the reviews editors of Network World conducted extensive tests on over 230 products and services of enterprise scope. Selection was based on the highest scores for products and services within a category that underwent Network World's rigorous, hands-on testing. Network World gives these awards in 13 separate categories and the Alcatel 4980 Softphone received the top score in the VoIP category.

According to Miercom, a member of the Network World Global Test Alliance, the Alcatel 4980 Softphone was clearly a cut above the other products tested in this category. This product supports more than 90 percent of the traditional corporate telephone features, and it topped the ticket in terms of installation, ease of use and configuration.

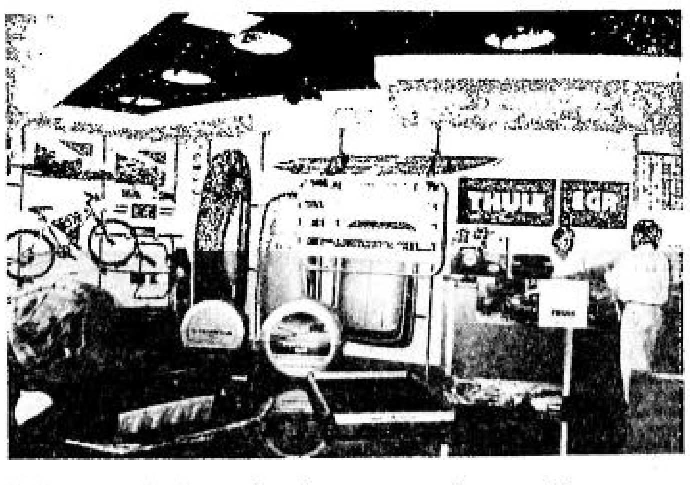
Additionally, Alcatel offers an easy to deploy, easy to manage Web-based soft phone for businesses wanting to exploit the full potential of the Internet by delivering corporate telephony features quickly and efficiently to online employees. Both the Alcatel WebSoftphone and 4980 Softphone are supported by a single server and may be used interchangeably by any licensed user.

"Network World's Best of the Tests Award reflects Alcatel's ability to excel in a competitive IP communications industry," said Tom Wilburn, general manager, Alcatel North America enterprise business. "After a series of market share accomplishments and major product distribution agreements around our North American business, it is rewarding to end the year on a high note with this prestigious accolade."

Product FILES

Innovative showroom

LOCATED along Ortigas Ave. cor Roosevelt St. in San Juan, Metro Manila is the Thule roof rack systems and EGR Sunguards showroom. Distributed locally by Thule/EGR Philippines, Thule roof rack systems are imported from Sweden. Thule roof rack product lines include bike carriers, aerodynamic roof boxes, aqua sports carriers and special load systems. "With Thule, you can double your car's load capacity", says Erwin Versoza, president of Thule/EGR Philippines.



A hit among the young is the EGR Sunguard system. Imported from Australia, EGR Sunguards guarantee sunlight protection inside the car. Its specially designed windshield and window visors does not only make your car look good, but it will also make you feel good and comfortable.

For inquiries regarding the Thule and EGR products, you may call 744-6367 or visit the website at www.thule.com

Siemens EMS phone now available

MESSAGES are sure to cut all barriers as Siemens recently launched the A50 mobile phone. This compact phone focuses on the essentials of mobile communication features the facility to compose extra long SMS and EMS messages, has an extended standby of 10 days, and five hours talk time that will clearly get the message across with minimum fuss.

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NOTICE TO DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED RURAL BANK OF BISLIG (SURIGAO DEL SUR), INC.

1. Starting January 7, 2003, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) thru its duly authorized representatives shall receive claims for insured deposits maintained with the closed Rural Bank of Bislig (Surigao del Sur), Inc.

2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the premises of the said closed bank from January 7, 2003 to January 16, 2003, Monday thru Fridays, during office hours, where PDIC representatives are stationed to accept claims and entertain queries of depositors.

   After the said dates, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC office from Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or by mail addressed to –

   The Manager
   Claims Processing Department
   Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
   2228 Chino Roces Avenue, 1231 Makati City

3. Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to our representatives when filing their claims:

   a. Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook and/or Certificate of Time Deposit; and
   b. Latest identification document (ID) bearing the depositor's signature

   Other documents may be required by our representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

4. Pursuant to the provisions of R.A. 3591, as amended, the prescriptive date (last day) for filing of claims for insured deposits in the closed Rural Bank of Bislig (Surigao del Sur), Inc. is on **May 18, 2004.** After **May 18, 2004,** PDIC as insurer, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

(PDI--Jan. 4 & 5, 2003)

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PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

MARA PAWNSHOP of 251 Quirino Ave. Baclaran Paranaque M.M. Auction Sale on Jan. 13, 2003, Mon. 4:00 in the afternoon, respectively. Aug. 14 - Sept. 13, 2002. Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer.

MARA PAWNSHOP BR. of 2410-18 P. Gil St. Sta. Ana Manila. Auction Sale on Jan. 13, 2003, Mon. at 2:30 in the afternoon, respectively, Aug. 14 - Sept. 13, 2002.
Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer

MARA PAWNSHOP I, II, III, IV and Comembo Br. of Makati City. Auction Sale on Jan. 13, 2003, Mon. at 10:30, 11:30, 1:30, 12:30 and 8:30 in the morning and on the afternoon. Respectively Aug. 14-Sept. 13, 2002. Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer.

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate/s of EPIFANIA ROTAIRO and SIMON LOPEZ who died on August 12, 1976 and January 27, 1963, respectively, consisting of the lot under TCT No. T-465, Alfonso, Cavite, has been extra-judicially settled with sale as per doc. no. 620, page no. 5, book no. XXIX, series of 2000 of notary public Vicente J. Villalobos.
(PDI-Dec. 21, 28 & Jan. 4, 2002)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late IRINED B. GERONIMO has been extrajudicially among his heirs with waiver of shares as per Doc No. 259, Page No. 52, Book No. XVIII, Series of 2002 before Atty. Zenaida Penaflor de Zuniga Notary Public, Pasig City.
(PDI-Jan. 4, 11, & 18 2003)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late RAMON S. JUAREZ, SR. has been settled by his heirs through partial extrajudicial settlement executed by Juanito Saavedra Notary Public of Manila Doc No 642 Page No. 30 Book No. III dated June 9, 2002 PTR No 091077 Jan 10, 2002 Mla IBP-528793 Feb 6, 2001 Pasig (PDI-Dec.21,28,2002 & Jan.4,2003)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of RICARDO L. RAYMUNDO of Cainta, Rizal who died on Feb. 19, 1990 was extrajudicially settled by his heirs per Doc. 208, Page. 42, Book. CLX, Series of 2002 of Notary Public Gregorio E. Arriola Jr. of Cainta, Rizal (PDI- Dec. 21, 28, & Jan 4 2002)

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NOTICE

Please get in touch with the Members Assistance Center, Social Security System (SSS), East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or at any SSS office nearest your place of residence and file your death benefit claim within 90 days upon publication, if you are:

NAME OF BENEFICIARIES	LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	NAME OF SSS MEMBER	DATE OF DEMISE
1) Letecia Delos Reyes Rozelio Agno	Unknown	Eustaquio G. Agno, Jr. SS#07-0867231-6	March 7, 1998
2) Nida Argalles	Unknown	Nelson Argalles SS#07-1227791-4	April 5, 2002
3) Mercuela V. Alibola	Calubian, Leyte & Almeria, Biliran, Leyte	Clarito Alibola, Jr. SS#33-1987590-7	April 3, 2001
4) Donald S. Banzuelo, Jr.	Unknown	Carina J. Banzuelo SS#33-1512157-4	July 27, 2002
5) Lolita Bardaje	Binaongan, Villareal, Samar	Felix P. Bardaje SS#03-1518672-9	November 7, 2002
6) Luisa Baroy	P.O. Box 337	Nicanor Baroy SS#10-0114625-0	October 4, 2002
7) Jocelyn Avendano Barquio	Unknown	Quirino A. Barquio SS#05-0535576-8	August 17, 2002
8) Maria Pastorate Burgas	Pta. Rizal, Lapu Lapu City, Cebu	Antero P. Burgas SS#07-0183333-0	October 12, 1993
9) N [illegible] Carpio	Malabon, Metro Manila	Amorsolo F. Carpio SS#03-1646587-2	August 14, 2002
10) Danilo Tambungco	Wawa, Taguig, M.M.	Josefina R. Castisimo SS#03-7328970-7	August 6, 2000
11) Mr. Cadiz	Unknown	Juliet Collado Cadiz SS#01-0208879-7	February 11, 2001
12) Francisco Cubillo	244-2 Riverside, Potrero, Malabon City	Roldan V. Cubillo SS#33-2819998-8	December 10, 2001
13) Marvin P. Tagle Arsenio B. Batacian	Unknown	Ruth S. De Jose SS#03-3215069-9	February 7, 1988
14) Alicia Delgado Arben Delgado	531 Dinalaga St., Caloocan City	Antonio Delgado SS#03-7230928-0	December 18, 1992
15) Dolores Domingo Dolores Babilonia	Mayamot, Antipolo, Rizal	Renato Domingo SS#03-5062441-1	July 22, 2002
16) Mary Jane Daza & Angelica	3370 Munting Isla V. Mapa, Sta. Mesa, Mla.	Angelo Evangelio Jr. SS#03-8874085-9	March 20, 1996
17) Pilar De Vayra Priscilla De Vera Edgar Gacura Robert Gacura Edna Gacura Elsa Gacura	Unknown	Dioso G. Gacura SS#03-2597286-8	March 20, 2001
18) Yolanda Mondejar	Baan, Butuan City	Diosdado D. Gonzales SS#03-2168306-1	November 5, 2002
19) Parents of Francisco	Unknown	Francisco Jimenez SS#04-0187784-5	January 13, 1995
20) Adorasion Madridano	106 Valdez St., Malabon, Metro Manila	Jaime Madridano SS#03-5951942-0	May 21, 1989
21) Jocelyn Saplco	Candelaria, Quezon	Epifanio Magboo SS#03-2135138-6	January 20, 2001
22) Omar R. Maravelis	Pinamalayan, Mindoro Oriental	Mark Anthony M. Maravelis SS#33-6343092-9	October 5, 2002
23) Jaime Martinez	15 J.P. Rizal Street, Mandaluyong, Rizal	Abel Martinez SS#03-8744924-5	November 19, 2000
24) Lida Barnobal Lida Ann Delfin Lyod	Lapina, Northern Samar	Delfin O. Masapequena SS#06-0223851-3	July 24, 2002
25) Maribel Gaurino-Odono	Unknown	Nicanor A. Odono SS#03-5816227-8	June 25, 2002
26) Adelina Bolalos	Daang Bakal, Nangka, Marikina	Dominador G. Patag SS#03-1532231-8	July 30, 2002
27) Leonila C. Roa	Kapatagan, Lanao Del Norte	Cresencio Pepito SS#33-6068764-9	March 6, 2001
28) Carlos Perales	Unknown	Virginia R. Perales SS#02-1084325-1	September 20, 2002
29) Ma. Jasmin Alienza	Los Baños, Laguna	Rolando C. Terbio SS#04-0546304-8	September 6, 2002
30) Corazon Remolla	2418 Tejeron St., Sta. Ana, Manila	Rafael V. Terante SS#03-0718554-7	May 23, 2002

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CRISPINA (Pinay) de BORJA LORENZO

Peacefully joined her CREATOR and her husband
at the age of 95 on January 3, 2003.

Her loving husband **Cesar** (+); children **Cesar, Jr., Cynthia** & **Ramon Picazo, Cecilio** & **Margie Lorenzo**; grandchildren **Paolo** & **Selina, Deanna, Macie, Pamela, Cria** & **Butch**; great grandchild **Maxine**; relatives and friends request those whose lives she touched to pray for her peaceful rest in the company of her beloved Creator.

Her remains lie in state at Sanctuario de San Jose, East Greenhills, San Juan.

"And when I saw you sleeping
so peaceful and free from pain
I could not wish you back to suffer again."

We will miss you and we love you very much.

RODOLFO O. DAZA

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 30, 2002
at the age of 72.

His wife **Josefina T. Daza**; children **Luis & Josie Daza, Maridol & Abet Guidaben, Susan & Joey Brillantes, Junie** (†) **& Olga Daza, Cirilo & Nanette Daza, Jose Ma. & Ann Daza, Roberto & Ava Daza**; grandchildren, nephew and nieces request relatives, friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie at the Filinvest 1 Clubhouse. Interment will be today (January 4, 2003) at Loyola Memorial Park Marikina City after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Filinvest 1 Chapel at Quezon City.

"... absent with the body
to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

ARCHITECT DEMETRIO LACSAMANA DAVID

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 2, 2003
at the age of 78.

His bereaved wife **PRESCY**; children **JOEL, ARIS & DIVINE, NONOY & GIGI, NIDES & CHERYL, AARON & LANI,** and **PEEWEE**; grandchildren, other relatives and friends request the readers to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His body lies in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels.

Interment will be on January 5, 2003 at the Himlayang Pilipino Memorial Park after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Arlington Chapel.

"The Lord is my Shpherd, I shall not want."

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"My soul, be at rest in God alone
from whom comes my hope." — **Psalm 51:3**

Our Dearly Beloved Daddy

Col. LIMNEO LAUREL PLATON MNSA (Ret.)

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on January 2, 2003
at the age of 81.

Wife **Thelma**; children **Tet** and **Nixon, Elaine** and **Joseph, Anthony, Wally, Veron, Princess** and **Angel**; grandchildren **Nizelle Anne, Rizelle Anne, Jerome, Keziah, Joed, Lawrence, Limneo II** and **Loren**; and foster sons and daughter **Jethrina, Jake, Renato** and **Francis**.

His body lies in state at Arlington East The Garden Chapels, C. Raymundo Avenue, Pasig City.

Interment to be announced later.

COUN. ROMEO "PANDAY" G. RIVERA, SR.

Died in the Grace of our Lord on January 02, 2003
at the age of 59.

His family requests the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Dulce Memorial Chapels (2nd Floor) 2926 Jose Abad Santos Avenue, Manuguit, Manila.

Interment will be on Tuesday, January 07, 2003, 9:00 a.m. at La Loma Catholic Cemetery, Caloocan City.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

"The Lord is my strength and my shield
in whom my heart trusted and found help.
So my heart rejoices with my song,
I praise my God."
Psalm 28:7

(Ret.) Col. EULOGIO "LOGIE" O. CAMBE

Peacefully joined his Creator
on January 2, 2003 at the age of 79.

His beloved wife **Edita Mayor**; children **Boy** and **Marie, Baby** and **Dave, Jun-Jun, Jarro, Abel** and **Lilet, Chit** and **Ed, Liza** and **Arnel, Jack** and **Trixie, Kelly** and **Joel**; grandchildren **Anne, Ralph, Dara, Ida, Robby, Andrea, John Paul, Paolo, Adrian, Camille, Therese, Joshua, Trisha, Timmy, Therese, Carlo, Noelle**; great granddaughter **Thea**; and sister **Felisa**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Logie has unselfishly given himself to his family and community. He will be remembered as a good husband, father, friend and above all servant of God. He has inspired and touched many lives by his faith, integrity and generosity.

His remains lie in state at Bahay Karmelo of Mt. Carmel Parish Church in Project 6, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 8, 2003 at the Assumption Ossuary after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Mt. Carmel Parish Church.

The family of

VIRGIL BANIQUET BERNARDINO

wishes to convey our gratitude to our relatives, friends and everyone who sent their condolences, flowers, donations, offered Masses, prayers, helped and comforted us during our time of bereavement. We find strength in knowing that he touched so many lives.

He will continue to live in our hearts.

In memory of the 40th day after his passing, Mass will be offered on Saturday, January 4, 6 p.m., at the Parish of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Bulletin Street, West Triangle, Quezon City.

We request your continued prayers for Vigil.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

Avelino Panlilio Suarez

who passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on December 14, 2002

wish to thank all those who visited, attended funeral services,
offered Masses and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy,
and in other ways joined us
as we marked his passage to eternal life.

ANGELITA CHI BURKLEY

Died in the Grace of our Lord on January 3, 2003 at the age of 59.

Her family and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Holy Family Chapel, Mt. Carmel Church, New Manila, Quezon City. The remains will be brought home to Gamu, Isabela on January 6, 2003.

Interment will be on January 8, 2003 at the Catholic Cemetery of Gamu, Isabela after the 8:00 a.m. celebration of the Holy Mass.

"From darkness let the light shine!"
Genesis 1:3

Vicente Vera Feliciano

who died on January 02, 2003 at the age of 68.

His remains now lie in state at Capilla C & D of Arlington East The Garden Chapels, C. Raymundo Ave. cor. Mercedes Ave., San Miguel, Pasig City.

Interment will be on Sunday, January 05, 2003 at the Holy Gardens Memorial Park, Taytay, Rizal after the 1:00 p.m. Mass.

His family requests relatives, friends and pious readers to join them in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

Science 2002 in review

By Massie K. Santos

(First of two parts)

ANOTHER year over, another chance to look back at the year in science. This year, perhaps more than ever, advances were made in the field of genetics that affected not just the scientific community but provoked discussions in religious and political circles as well.

Every new discovery emphasizes the continued intermarriage between science and technology, and the importance and relevance of science in humanity's everyday life. The stories selected are grouped by category, if only to make it even more clear just how much has been accomplished this year.

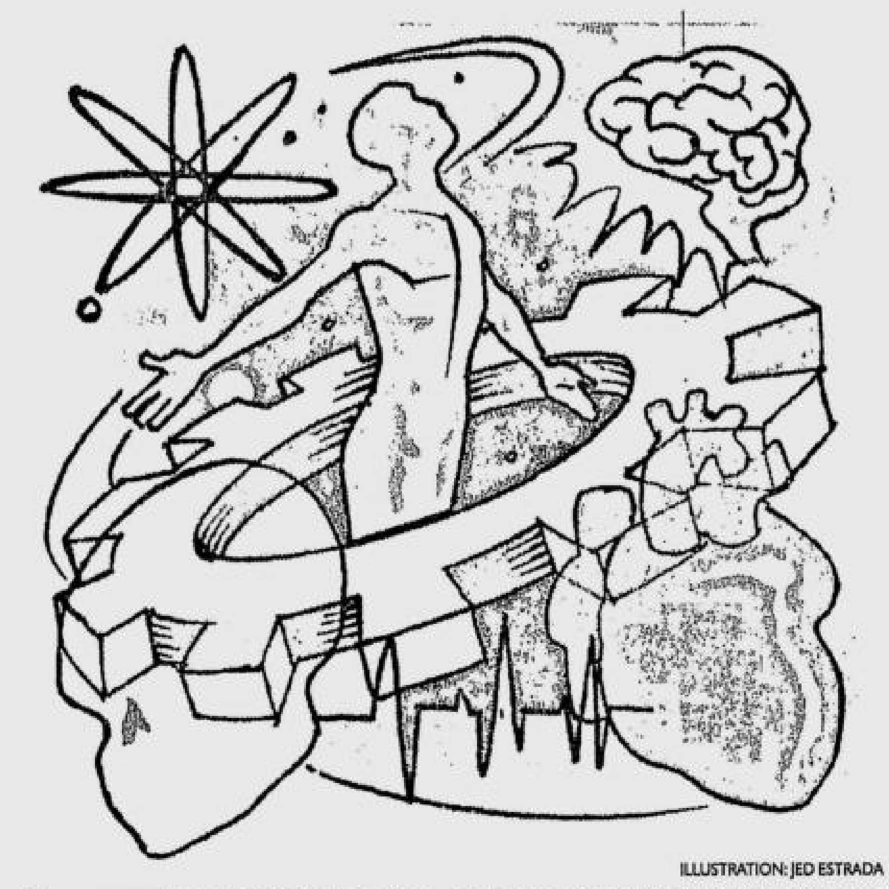


ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

In remembrance

The world lost early this year two of the most well-known scientific figures—Thor Heyerdahl and Stephen Jay Gould.

Heyerdahl was a Norwegian explorer and archeologist perhaps best remembered for his work on the origins of the Polynesians, as the people of the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia were called at the time.

In the 1940s, popular science held that the Polynesian islands were settled by Stone Age people from Southeast Asia who had paddled against ocean currents for 10,000 miles to reach their new home. Heyerdahl argued instead that the Polynesians' ancestors came east from as far north as British Columbia in northwestern Canada, and as far south as Peru and the Easter Islands.

To prove his point, he built in 1947 a boat made of balsa wood, an exact replica of what the Polynesians would have used, called it the Kon-Tiki and repeated the journey from Peru to Polynesia in under four months. He went on to lead several other major archeological expeditions in Africa and Easter Island, but the Kon-Tiki story captured the public's heart and won him worldwide recognition.

Gould was a paleontologist who was a strong advocate of the theory of punctuated equilibrium, an idea which challenges Darwin's concept that survival of the fittest, or natural selection, as the way in which evolution proceeds.

Punctuated equilibrium holds that evolution occurred in short, sudden bursts rather than at a constant steady pace.

Gould is perhaps best remembered for making science accessible to the public, writing essays about topics such as the panda's thumb and why flamingos feed with their heads upside down for years. Well, that, and the fact that he was on "The Simpsons" trying to help Lisa disprove the existence of an angel's skeleton in Springfield.

Building a better body

From silicon, to collagen, to Botox and literally putting poison in one's body, to collagen made from cow gristle, and now to DNA-specific skin cream, consumers found new products designed to make them look better and feel better about themselves.

Lab 21, a New York-based company, claimed that for $250, customers who fill out a brief questionnaire about their lifestyle, environment and ethnic background and let the inside of their cheeks be swabbed for a DNA sample will get a custom-made 1.7-ounce jar of skin cream. The cream is supposed to work with the five genes known to affect skin sensitivity and aging to help people keep that youthful glow about them longer.

Sound too good to be true? Most scientists agree.

And anyone who thinks that too many strangers already have their private information on hand will probably be unhappy at the thought of sharing their life story with even more people they don't know.

Lab 21 swears that their customers' personal information will stay confidential, and that the genetic information obtained from the DNA samples will be destroyed immediately. Still, one can't help but wonder if they'll hold on to that promise or sell everything to the highest bidder when the company goes bankrupt.

Organ transplants

There are never enough organs available for transplant, which in part led to the development of the Abiocor artificial implantable heart last year and a closer look at animals as organ donors.

This year xenotransplantation on a regular basis moved one step closer to reality when knockout pigs were developed in a joint effort by scientists at the University of Missouri funded by Novartis AG and Immerge.

The pigs' DNA is missing a gene called GGTA1, which coats pig cells in sugars and causes their organs to be recognized as invaders and treated as such by the human body. If they can make sure that they have both copies of the gene inactive to prevent rejection, they can start human trials by 2005.

Israel hosts biggest agri trade fair this year

By Charles E. Buban

ISRAEL welcomes 2003 with the announcement of its biggest agricultural event in four years: the 15th International Agricultural Exhibition five months from now.

The newly built $30-million Israel Trade Fairs and Convention Center in Tel Aviv expects to host more than 90,000 visitors from 100 countries to view the exhibits of more than 250 agricultural industry leaders.

"Agritech is regarded as one of the most important agricultural exhibitions in the world and we are very proud to host this important event in Israel—a country with great achievements in this field," announced Dr. Arie Regev of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Triumph against Nature

Israel's agriculture is the result of a long struggle against harsh, adverse conditions and of making maximum use of scarce water and arable land.

The country has become so successful in its efforts that even though agriculture represents a mere 2.4 percent of the country's gross domestic product and 4 percent of exports, its input in the year 2000 was worth about $3.3 billion, 20 percent of which was exported.

Israel's agricultural successes have been achieved largely due to the application of sophisticated technology and scientific methods.

When the Jews began resettling in the late 19th century, their first efforts were directed toward turning barren land into fertile fields. Much of the effort was done through organized cooperatives known as the kibbutz and moshav, which evolved in the early 20th century.

By the time Israel attained its independence in 1948, the total area under cultivation had increased to approximately 1.1 million acres and irrigated land to about 0.6 million acres.

Agritech preparations

Last October, Israel's Export Institute invited a group of journalists from all over the world, including the Philippines, to see the preparations for Agritech 2003. The group was introduced to the latest innovations in Israeli agriculture, which will be on display at the trade fair from May 19 to 22.

The group toured the Agricultural Research Organization-Volcani Center, the research arm of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture; research and development centers in Arava where experiments and demo farms are located amid the arid terrain of the country's southern region; and agricultural input industries such as Raz Brothers (manufacturer of sprayers and agricultural machinery), Polysack (plasticulture), Shelah Engineering Systems (agricultural machinery), and S.A.E. Afikim (cow-milking machinery).

The group also visited the training facility at the Center for International Agricultural Development Cooperation at Kibbutz Shefayim, where courses and workshopson a wide range of agricultural subjects are held regularly for participants from the developing countries .

ASK THE DENTIST

Paul R. De Castro, DMD

The crown that's too white

I WAS happy when my dentist fixed my broken tooth by cementing a porcelain crown on it. But now that I found time to look at it more closely in the mirror, I noticed that it looks too white and too obvious that I have a porcelain crown. Is there anything I can do about it?

Cecilia L.

Some people's teeth are easier to match than others. The porcelain crown can be stained properly before it is cemented. For difficult cases such as yours, the dentist and the laboratory will have to combine their artistic abilities.

If you take a good look at your natural teeth, you will notice that the middle part has a different color compared to the sides or the biting edge. A properly stained crown can give off a hue similar to your natural teeth.

Unfortunately the stains can only be applied before cementation. After that you'll need to change the crown if you want one with a different color.

(The author is a cosmetic and general dentist licensed here and in the United States. Your questions are welcome at dentalqs@yahoo.com.)

Addressing the problem of treatment compliance

FOR PEOPLE with chronic or longstanding diseases which require prolonged treatment, medications are often as much a part of the daily routine as brushing once teeth. In treating disease entities such as heart failure, the drug regimen may require complicated pill schedules that could confound even the most diligent and organized individuals.

However, even if it requires only taking a single pill, compliance can still be a problem for many.

Poor compliance

What many patients do not realize is that what appears as a simple medical problem such as an elevated cholesterol level, which would have required a simple drug regimen, may result in serious complications such as heart attacks and strokes if left untreated or inadequately treated because of poor compliance. The complicated state would require more pills to take which will further worsen the compliance problem.

Many physicians struggle with issues of medication adherence in their daily practice. Compliance experts advice that doctors should try to prescribe their patient with drug regimens that will suit their lifestyles and budget. Although the burden of compliance is really on the patient, the physician should make sure that important compliance issues are properly addressed so that the patient sticks to a drug plan to maintain good health.

There are some studies which point to a specific personality profile that could predict patients with poor compliance. Patients who are more organized, high-strung, with very structured lives, and serious at work are supposed to show better compliance. However, this profile does not hold true in Third World countries where cost of medications is still a major predictor of compliance and the patient's personality profile is just a minor factor.

Big challenge

Since cost of medications is a major issue in the patient's adherence to the prescribed drug regimen, the big challenge to the big pharmaceutical companies in the country is to come up with high-quality but reasonably priced medicines which the average Filipino worker can afford. This is especially true for drugs needed to treat cardiovascular diseases which are now the leading cause of deaths among Filipinos.

Cholesterol-lowering drugs such as statins have now been shown to significantly reduce the incidence of heart attacks and strokes even in patients with just average cholesterol levels. Giving statins especially in high-risk patients such as diabetics and those with multiple risk factors may help reduce cardiovascular complications and prolong life. However, because of their cost, statins have been saddled with compliance problems.

Simvastatin is one of the most scientifically documented statins, the efficacy and clinical benefits of which have been proven by large-scale well-designed clinical trials. A big boost to compliance of local patients is the introduction of an affordable brand of simvastatin by Therapharma. It is hoped that other companies will follow suit in bringing down the prices of their essential drugs for various cardiovascular ailments such as hypertension, diabetes and elevated cholesterol levels.

Common barriers

Health experts have identified common barriers to compliance which physicians should be aware of:

- One barrier is the dose frequency or the number of times that pills must be taken each day. Patients who are taking medications that require them to take the pills three times a day, may have serious compliance problems. Usually the middle dose is missed.
- Pill burden, or the number of pills that have to be taken each time, can also be daunting for some patients. The more pills patients have to take each time, the poorer is the expected compliance.
- Sometimes just the reminder of being sick is a burden that can prevent good compliance. Even patients who must take only one pill a day will sometimes say, "It reminds me of my illness every time," and that becomes a barrier for them.
- Then there are lifestyle-related issues such as, "I work, and when I get home, I'm really tired. I don't remember," or "I remember my pills every night before I go to bed, but in the morning I have so many things to do I can't remember," or "I get my kids out of bed and I give them their medicine, but I forget mine."
- The incidence of side effects is also a major issue. If a patient experiences or thinks he or she experiences a side effect with a medication, it impairs drug adherence.
- Lastly, but probably the most important factor in developing countries like ours, is the cost of medications. Ideally, the doctor should be familiar with the actual price of the drugs he prescribes. It would be futile to make a prescription which the patient would not be able to buy anyway.

OMX
OMX
JED E.

ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

OM-X PROBIOTICS

Medicine of the millennium

By Dr. Josef de Ubaldo, DSc.
Contributor

IF you were a diabetic, you would know that your chances of developing gangrenous wounds are very high. These may start from simple cuts or bruises you've acquired through sports or other physical activities.

A case in point is that of Christian Bernard C. Dy, a 21-year-old man who suffered from diabetes with gangrenous wounds that started with a mosquito bite. He didn't know at that time that he already had diabetes. The mosquito bite got bigger and bigger, and two more wounds developed.

Only after seeking medical help did he find out that he was suffering from diabetes. This condition, he said, was genetic: both his parents have diabetes and his mother passed away due to complications from the disease. He then underwent various kinds of treatments, to no avail. His wounds persisted.

At one point, his condition became so unbearable that he lost all hope of ever getting better. Divine Providence came in the form of his neighbor who is a distributor of the Ohhira Mountain fruit eXtract (OM-X). His neighbor shared with him the benefits of live lactic acid bacteria in the body.

With nothing else to lose, he got himself a supply of the "wonder drug" and started taking two capsules per day. After a period of 30 days, he noticed that his wounds had begun to dry up. In fact, 60 percent of it was almost healed. Increasing his dosage to 15 capsules a day (there is no harmful side effect of taking bigger doses, depending on your condition), his wounds completely healed after another 30 days.

Good, bad bacteria

This is only one of the many accounts of satisfied OM-X users throughout the country. The concept behind this amazing drug is that within our bodies lie millions of good and bad bacteria.

The good bacteria help propagate good health and help us in quite a number of our physiological functions such as digestion and immune system functioning. They also benefit our mental and emotional equilibrium, help us deal with environmental and food toxins, etc.

The bad bacteria, of course, can have numerous negative effects on our bodies, including intestinal irritation, cramps and spasms, excessive flatulence, or chronic diarrhea, or diarrhea alternating with constipation.

Ideal ratio

Did you know that living in a constant state of anger or frustration actually enables the walls of your intestinal tract to secrete a different type of mucus, which encourages proliferation of a not so desirable breed of bacteria?

Ideally, our bodies should have a ratio of 85 percent good bacteria against 15 percent bad bacteria. This balance is the perfect combination to acquire and maintain good health. If this balance is tipped, where the bad bacteria outnumber the good bacteria, fungus and yeast living in your gut can easily propagate.

Severe yeast overgrowth can result to the Candida Syndrome. Symptoms of this include chronic exhaustion, skin problems, multiple allergies, chronic vaginal thrush, digestive and bowel problems, and PMS and menstrual irregularities.

Fermented foods

The good thing about probiotics, or good live bacteria, is that anybody can benefit from it—from babies to grandparents. Babies for instance, have their first encounter with the friendly microbes through breast milk. One way to increase good bacteria in the body is through regular consumption of fermented foods. In China, Japan, India and Eastern Europe, fermented foods are considered as dietary staples.

The fermentation process allows certain bacteria from the air and local surroundings to grow in the food and subsequently, in the gut of those people who eat it.

Probiotic supplements

There are likewise probiotic supplements now available in the market. The key here is to be conscientious in what probiotic supplements to take. You'll be amazed at how many inferior products there are in the market.

Dr. Iichiroh Ohhira, a renowned Japanese microbiologist, has been conducting research on lactic acid bacteria for more than 20 years now. Based on his research, he strongly believes that maintaining the presence of good bacteria in our gastro-intestinal tract is one of the most important steps in achieving overall good health.

In his desire to promote good health and help people restore equilibrium in their physiological makeup, he developed OM-X, a capsule containing good live bacteria. OM-X, otherwise known as Ohhira Mountain fruits eXtract, contains 12 types of lactic acid bacteria, derived from wild fruits and herbs, fermented over a period of five years. These are then encapsulated in gel form, which them a longer shelf life (one year if kept under room temperature and away from direct heat of the sun) compared to freeze-dried powders and other capsules.

(Dr. De Ubaldo is the president of the Philippine Federation of Natural Health and Environment-Friendly Organizations. He can be reached at 371-7015.)

Creating humanoids by cloning unethical and deplorable

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

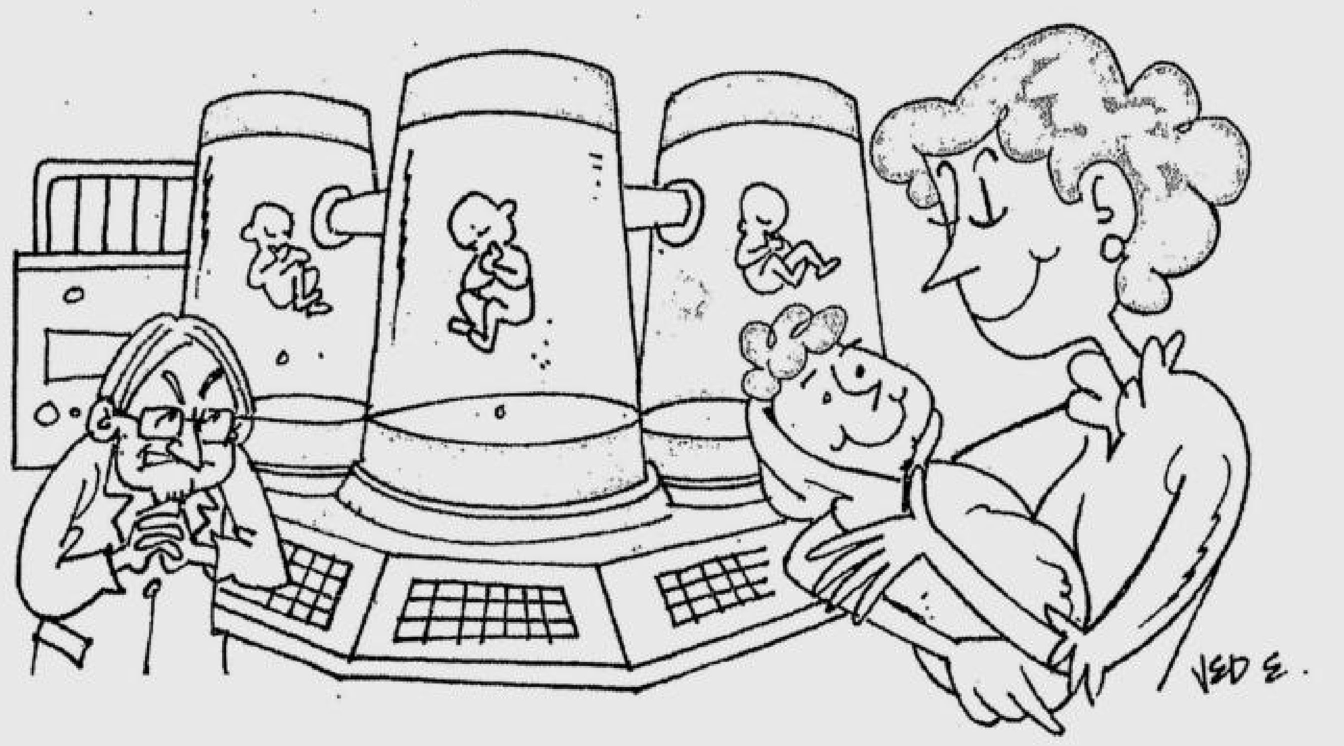


ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

ONE of the yearend shockers we got late last week was the claim from the Raelian cult that the first cloned human baby has been born. The cult's spokesperson claims Baby Eve is a perfect copy of her mother, who is a member of the sect.

MEDICAL FILES

Almost immediately, scientists, medical experts, religious leaders, ethicists and even the ordinary man on the street around the world greeted this with a mixture of disbelief, disgust, apprehension and outright fear that we might be seeing the invasion of a new generation of nonhuman humans, or humanoids.

The seven-pound Eve was delivered by Cesarean section last Dec. 26 to a 31-year-old American woman whose husband is infertile. The nuclear cloning procedure reportedly was performed by Clonaid, a company founded by former French journalist Claude Vorilhon. Announcing Eve's birth, Clonaid chief executive officer Brigitte Boisselier, who is also a Raelian bishop, said the baby was healthy.

Mere PR stunt?

The Raelian scientists have gone a step too far by changing the DNA of a developing embryo with that of the mother. The Raelians have not yet presented DNA tests to prove their claim on Baby Eve. One can only hope that this "breakthrough" is a mere PR hoax, but it gives one goose pimples that the ability to clone humans is not merely a scientific possibility now but possibly already a reality.

Can this be considered a legitimate scientific breakthrough or is it a diabolical 21st century Babelian effort to play God and take into human hands what God has already designed perfectly through the natural process of procreation?

Big ethical questions remain over how such technology should be used or indeed over whether it should be used at all.

Against cloning

A number of scientists and ethicists have expressed strong sentiments against human cloning and actually moved for its banning. The National Academy of Sciences this year opposed the practice as unsafe.

"I think it is unthinkable that someone did this," said Mark Westhusin, a Texas University veterinary medicine professor who has spent 15 years in cloning research. Westhusin, who has successfully cloned cats, cattle and goats, said he is "completely against" human cloning.

"From a standpoint of safety, there is no way of telling what types of developmental abnormalities might occur over the long term," he said. "Regardless of your moral stance, it's reckless to do this without more animal studies."

Eugene Boisaubin, a professor of medicine and ethicist for clinical research at the University of Texas Health Science Center, said human cloning procedures are "not ready for prime time."

"To try to do this today is scientifically and morally irresponsible," he said. "I just can't believe it would be done by any reputable scientist in the Western world."

Victor Land, who heads the Baptist convention's Nashville, Tennessee-based ethics and religious liberty commission, said, "I'm very concerned that if we don't ban reproductive cloning, we will have clone slaves housed on clone plantations. We have not successfully provided full legal protection to unborn babies in the womb. What if a (multimillionaire) decides to clone himself for spare body parts? I'm not confident this society is capable of providing full protection to clones as human beings. We will have warehouses of clones. This is not a road we want to step onto."

Unethical

Cloning is unethical and deplorable, and no amount of perfected research on its methodology, now or in the future, can justify it.

If a lot of objection was raised on stem cell research which was intended to modify disease entities such as Alzheimer's, diabetes or cancer, it looks like kid's play compared to whatever clandestine research several groups are now conducting on human cloning.

At the rate it's going, we're going to have scores of humanoids born this year.

It won't be a surprise if these scientists can come up with another breakthrough of speeding up the gestation period, such that instead of nine months, human pregnancy could be much shorter with the carbon copy of the donor delivered soon after delivery. This would convert the divinely inspired process of the mother nurturing her baby in her womb to a commercialized industry where one could hope to perpetuate himself by ordering a clone or two, not to be reared as we normally do with our offspring, but to serve as reservoir for body parts should one's own organs become defective.

"There seems to be a scientific race to create the first (cloned) individuals without thinking of the consequences," said Celia Fisher, director of ethics education at New York's Fordham University. "My guess is that it has to do with economic gain."

Army of humanoids

It can make one's stomach go queasy to think that we're developing some kind of a macabre baby market and an army of potential Frankenstein humanoids.

The fact remains that human cloning is immoral and very dangerous. It subverts the natural process and maliciously amends the natural law that every individual is unique unto himself and no one else is exactly like him.

It converts humans into templates that can reproduce as many identical copies as he desires for whatever reasons he may have.

Any artificial manner of duplicating the natural process of reproduction and gestation has been fraught with a lot of eventual unanticipated adverse complications. Cloned animals like the sheep Dolly looked healthy at birth, but soon developed abnormalities like arthritis, obesity and other signs of premature aging. In other cloned animals, multiple congenital defects were present at birth.

Are these maverick cloning scientists also considering the sacrifice of "babies" who have multiple congenital abnormalities—either at birth or probably earlier through abortion—and just retry again until such time that a perfect humanoid is attained?

Humans are complex

The cloning scientists are equating a human being to mere flesh, bones and organs. But the real human is much more complex than that. The divinely endowed "breath of life" infuses in a newborn the traits which the genetic map provided by the DNA cannot determine. One's spirit, character or personality are not purely genetically programmable.

And even granting that healthy humanoids are born, how do their parents explain it to them when they grow up? Are they their parents' children, or the sibling and identical twin of whoever the DNA donor is? Since only one parent is the gene donor, the other parent will have no genetic participation whatsoever in the child. As it is, there is already so much source of confusion in the world, and this is likely to be another big source of juvenile confusion. A lot of psychological disturbances can be expected in these humanoids.

The humanoids are coming. Let's pray they leave space for true humans, like you and me and our children.

Much ado about e

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

e is not nearly as popular as p in the public mind, but for mathematicians and other scientists, it is as significant. Approximately 2.71828..., it is an irrational number and is the base of natural logarithms.

It appears in real-life situations, such as those involving growth and decay (populations, compound interest, carbon dating), probability and counting (such as the bell-shaped normal probability of heights and IQs), the shapes of cables (such as the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Minnesota), the distribution of prime numbers, approximating factorials, and of course, lots of problems in calculus.

Ross Simeon [rsimeon23@yahoo.com] requests: Can you write about the intriguing equation e raised to (i*pi) + 1 = 0? When was it discovered and can you also include the mathematical proof?

The late Doreen Fernandez, my mentor, once warned me jokingly that it had been said that for every single equation I include in my column, the number of readers will decrease by half. However, she went on to say that this should not deter me if some readers are interested. So be forewarned—there will be a proof, albeit a simple and gentle one—below.

Before we go to the equation above, let us look first at another equation, officially called Euler's equation, since it was discovered by the famous Swiss mathematician Leonard Euler in 1748:

exi = cos(x) + sin(x) i,

where x is any real number and the measure of an angle in radians, i is an imaginary number and the square root of -1. In fact a similar equation was found by Abraham DeMoivre in 1722 and Roger Cotes before that.

Traditionally there are two different proofs of Euler's equation—the first uses infinite series, and the second uses calculus. I will include the first one here. (This proof was taken from the useful website Math Forum, www.mathforum.org.)

There are infinite series expansions for each of the functions ez, cos(z), and sin(z), found from Maclaurin's Series, as follows:

ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

ez = 1 + z + z2/2! + z3/3! + z4/4! + z5/5! + z6/6! + ...,

cos(z) = 1 - z2/2! + z4/4! - z6/6! + z8/8! - z10/10! + ...,

sin(z) = z - z3/3! + z5/5! - z7/7! + z9/9! - z11/11! + ...

All three series are valid for all real numbers. We want to accept the first one as valid for all complex numbers z. Then substitute z = xi, expand, use the facts that i2 = -1, i3 = -i, i4 = 1, and so on, and collect real and imaginary parts. You'll see that the real part of exi is just the series for cos(x), and the imaginary part is just the series for sin(x).

Now why do we go into all this trouble? Patience, my friends. Because once we accept Euler's equation, we are inevitably led into a nice consequence. Substitute x = 1 into Euler's equation, and then what appears is Mr. Simeon's stated equation: e i = -1 or e i + 1 = 0.

The proof using calculus is just as satisfying, but I don't want to scare away any more readers. Those who are interested can go to the Math Forum site and ponder the details.

Sweaty palms, feet

Let us go to another topic: sweaty palms and feet.

Mrs. J of Las Piñas sent the following letter: I read something in your column about sweaty hands and feet (I am not sure when it was, but perhaps it was in February, March or April of 2001). I would like to know more about this, because my children suffer from sweaty hands and feet. I want to do something about it while they are still young. I hope you can help me.

I am honored that you believe that I wrote about this issue, but I never did. You must have mistaken my column for that of a medical doctor's. However, I will say something about this condition.

About one person in 500 suffers from hyperhidrosis, which is excessive sweating, especially of the hands and feet. According to Dr. Mercola (www.mercola.com), "Sweating is a normal and physiological function that helps balance our system, but when one sweats excessively, this is a clear sign that there is something desperately wrong with the autonomic nervous system, specifically the sympathetic nervous system."

Are there ways to cure this? One popular technique is to reduce excessive grains and sugars in the diet (although I am not really sure how effective this is). The extreme way would be nerve surgery, but I doubt that the dangers justify this. My best advice for you would be to consult a dermatologist and follow what he or she says. Happy New Year!

(Queena N. Lee-Chua, Ph.D., is an associate professor of mathematics and psychology at the Ateneo de Manila University. She also writes the column "Mind Games" for www.inq7.net every Wednesday. Contact her at blessbook@yahoo.com.)

ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

Sex and Dr. Tatiana

DISCOVER

Massie K. Santos

"DEAR Dr. Tatiana,

There's been a frightful accident. I was happily sitting in my usual spot...when I felt an itch on my nose. Being a green spoon worm, I don't have any arms and I couldn't scratch. So I sniffed. And I inhaled my husband. I've tried sneezing, but he hasn't reappeared. Is there anything I can do to get him back?"

How can anyone resist reading such a letter to an advice columnist, much less reading his/her reply? As Raelians and their theories of how aliens populated the Earth through cloning techniques 25,000 years ago fill the news, it seems appropriate to take a look at the wonderful world of sex and other ways of doing "it."

No, this is not going to be a sex advice column (I could never hope to rival Margie Holmes), nor is this going to be a column about Kama Sutra-ish positions because Redbook does that so well. It's more of a look at how other organisms on this planet have sex, and for this information I have Olivia Judson, aka Dr. Tatiana, to thank for endless hours of educational amusement since I finally got to read her book last month.

Definitive guide

Olivia Judson is an evolutionary biologist who got her undergraduate degree from Stanford and her Ph.D. at Oxford. Her book, "Dr. Tatiana's Sex Advice to All Creatures: The Definitive Guide to the Evolutionary Biology of Sex," was published last August and borders on invading another's privacy, coaxing (human, unless other creatures have learned to read) readers into looking at the sex lives of various organisms, all candidly revealed in these pages.

Some of these stories would be considered deviant, violent and just plain wrong sexual behavior. Topics such as rape, incest, homosexuality, hermaphrodites (or intersexed, as they prefer to be called), asexuality and even cloning are tackled by looking at creatures ranging from birds and hyenas to various bugs and insects and even bacteria.

Incestuous mites

Incest is a topic discussed early on in the book, when a mite writes to say that that morning his mother's stomach burst while he'd been having sex with one of his sisters "as usual" in her (the mom, not the sister, although technically...never mind). Now he's alone in his mother's corpse, his sisters having all wandered away, and he wants to know if he's going to hell for his actions.

Yes, it's appalling; yes, it's funny; and no, says the good doctor, he's not going to hell.

Actually, she goes on to say, there are a lot of other creatures who have incest with close relatives. The main reason it's taboo for humans is the possibility that both copies of a recessive gene (such as those that cause a number of cancers) will appear in their offspring and cause serious physical and/or mental defects.

Every gene, such as eye color, comes in two forms: dominant (i.e., brown) and recessive (i.e., blue). If someone with brown eyes marries someone with blue eyes, their children's eyes will be brown three chances out of four when at least one dominant copy of the gene is passed on, unless the child gets both recessive copies.

Important, troublesome

In explaining her book's theme, Dr. Judson has been quoted as saying, "I decided to dedicate myself to sex when I realized that nothing in life is more important, more interesting, or more troublesome... If not for sex, much of what is flamboyant and beautiful in nature would not exist."

In other words, she argues as a minor theme, groups claiming that homosexuals, transgenders, etc. are unnatural have no basis in making that claim because other organisms in this planet do behave that way, as she points out in her various (nonexistent) columns.

But to return to the plight of the poor spoon worm and her missing husband. The news is both good and bad, says Dr. Tatiana. The good news is, he wanted to be inhaled, it means he will never leave her, and now he will father all of her children. The bad news is, he's never coming back out of her body.

The male spoon worm, it turns out, is actually 200,000 times smaller than his wife, and fertilizes her eggs from within her, in a chamber called the androecium that can actually hold quite a number of husbands, should she be interested in acquiring a harem of sorts and having several fathers for her children.

The final chapter of the book deals with the importance of males in ensuring the continued existence of a species. Then again, maybe the Raelians have it right and in the future everyone will be transferring their minds and personalities into new, cloned bodies to live forever instead of procreating and continuing the family line that way. Either way, this book is definitely a must-read, and I can't say anymore because I've run out of space. So go find this book. NOW.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Editor Cesar D. Mangawang ◎ Assistant Editor Stella O. Gonzales

Local Raelians offer cloning to childless Filipino couples

By Tessa R. Salazar
and Charles E. Buban

ITS Quebec-based mother (pardon the pun) organization still has to provide proof to its claim that it has produced a baby clone named "Eve," but the Philippine Raelian Movement is already raring to offer its help to infertile Filipino couples.

The PRM says it is willing to endorse couples to the international Raelian (pronounced RYE-elian) Movement, which believes that space aliens created life on Earth.

Rogelio Tan, PRM national guide, told the INQUIRER in an interview last Wednesday that they hope these Filipino couples would be added to the list of those due for cloning.

Tan, however, quickly added that his group can offer "no guarantees, but at least a ray of hope" to the couples.

The PRM's offer came a few days after Brigitte Boisselier, president of Clonaid, a Raelian-founded human cloning society, claimed that the first human baby clone was born in an undisclosed place on Dec. 26 through a process called human DNA nucleus transfer.

CLAUDE Vorilhon, aka Claude Rael, poses with his book "Yes to Human Cloning" in this February 2002 file photograph. REUTERS

Ex-journalist

The Raelian Movement got its name from its spiritual leader and founder Claude Vorilhon, 56, who wrote for car racing magazines in his native France before becoming the self-proclaimed prophet Rael 29 years ago. Rael founded the movement after his encounter with extraterrestrial aliens on Dec. 13, 1973.

In his book "The Final Message," he described the ET aliens as 1.2 meters who descended from a seven-meter wide flying saucer while he was jogging around a remote volcano in the south of France.

One of the aliens, Yahweh Elohim, told him they created human life on Earth through genetic engineering.

Pinoy Raelians

The Raelian Movement is now in 84 countries and has more than 55,000 members worldwide, according to Japanese Raelian Movement's Kayo Takahashi who visited the INQUIRER in October last year.

"We also have expanded to other Asian countries including Korea, Taiwan, China, Nepal, Oceana and the Philippines," Takahashi said.

Vorilhon came to the Philippines in 1989 and spoke to nearly 500 Filipinos about the message of the ET alien Elohim. Cesar C. Caparros, an engineer, formed the Philippine Raelian Movement in 1993. After three years, he transferred the task of leading the group to Tan, a businessman.

According to Tan, the PRM today has more than a hundred members nationwide, including doctors, priests and scientists.

The PRM is in constant touch with the Raelian Movement, and has sent some of its members to Japan to attend seminars. It holds annual seminars called "Awakening" and displays photos of UFO sightings at the Runnex Kiosk at the Quezon Memorial Circle every Saturday afternoon.

More pregnancies

Caparros said there were actually 10 pregnancies involving cloned implantations. Five of these pregnancies ended in miscarriages before Eve's alleged successful delivery. The other four are said to be due in early February. Another 20 cloning procedures are scheduled this year.

Caparros said not only childless couples would be given hope. Even loved ones who have already died could be "resurrected"—provided that a DNA sample from the deceased could be obtained.

Tan said cloning isn't science fiction anymore. The next 10 years, he said, would in fact be a decade of genetics, ushering in new breakthroughs in the cure for cancer and AIDS.

Just setting the stage

What Clonaid has done so far, he said, is just to set the stage for even more astounding developments in human cloning. He said cloning is still in its first stage wherein the embryo of a woman is needed to be a host for the cloned baby.

The second stage, Tan said, would forego the long childhood stage of cloned humans. The accelerated growth process would speed up human growth—from embryo to about 18 years of age—in just three days.

Just like a computer

But what about the empty mind of the fast-tracked 18-year-old?

That would be addressed by the third stage, Tan disclosed. The personality and memory of the donor will be transferred to his or her clone.

Think of it like transferring all your knowledge and personality into a diskette and downloading its contents into a new CPU. Tan said scientists in Japan are already experimenting with such a concept.

"The memory of a man who died at 90 will be transferred to a new 18-year-old body," he explained.

The person will wake up with the wisdom of a 90-year-old in a body of a strong 18-year-old. Another chance at life. Another chance to continue his unfinished business.

Tan stressed this was the "everlasting life" being described in the Bible.

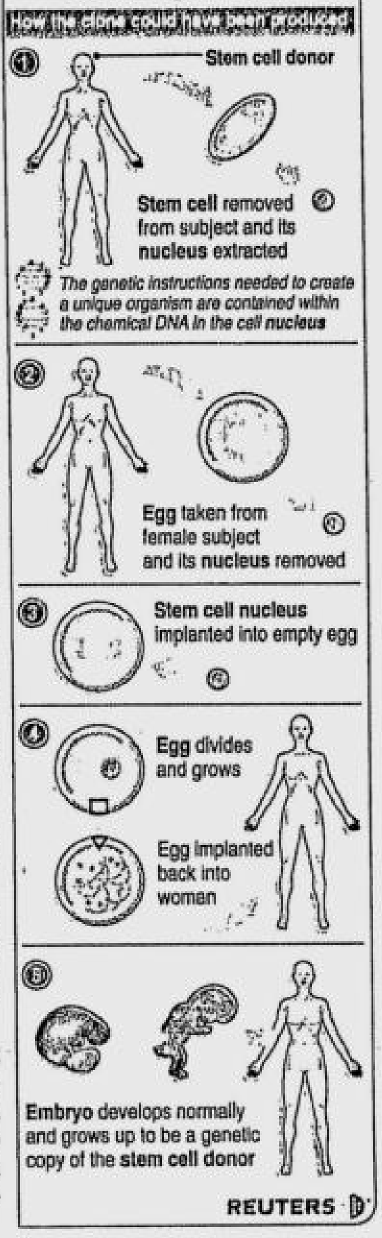
Asked if the Raelian Movement was much ahead of its time, Tan replied that after a few years, Rael's ideas would be "as old as the ideas of others."

Cloning humans is at the heart of the Raelian teaching of "scientific creation," which Takahashi describes as an alternative to both Darwinian evolution and the creation dogma of some religions.

POSSIBLE HUMAN CLONING TECHNIQUE

A company set up by an obscure cult has claimed to have produced the first clone of a human being

Besides almost universal condemnation, many experts doubted whether the world's first cloned baby had been born at all as the cult had given no proof


How the clone could have been produced
①
Stem cell donor
Stem cell removed from subject and its nucleus extracted
The genetic instructions needed to create a unique organism are contained within the chemical DNA in the cell nucleus
②
Egg taken from female subject and its nucleus removed
③
Stem cell nucleus implanted into empty egg
④
Egg divides and grows
Egg implanted back into woman
⑤
Embryo develops normally and grows up to be a genetic copy of the stem cell donor
REUTERS

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[2] Heart Protection Study Collaborative Group MRC/BHF Heart Protection Study of cholesterol lowering with simvastatin in 20,536 high-risk individuals: a randomized placebo controlled trial. The Lancet 2002 July; 360 (9326): 7-22.

* This class of drug is approved for sale by BFAD as a prescription drug and should be bought only with a prescription.

DNA SAMPLES
JED E.

ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

2,000 on cloning list, Clonaid says

MIAMI—The founder of the Raelian religion whose adherents claim to have cloned a human said a company he created has 2,000 people waiting to have themselves or a loved one cloned, a newspaper reported last Monday.

Claude Vorilhon said in an hour-long interview last Sunday in Miami that the company has a list of people willing to pay $200,000 each for cloning, the Miami Herald reported.

Brigitte Boisselier, the head of Clonaid, had announced on Dec. 26 that the company had produced the first human clone with the birth of a baby girl called Eve to a 31-year-old American woman. But she offered no proof.

The announcement drew immediate skepticism from experts and renewed questions on the ethics of human cloning.

Eve goes home

The 7-pound (3 kg) newborn went home on Monday, said Clonaid spokeswoman Nadine Gary. The company has refused to say where her home is, or where Eve was born.

Vorilhon told the Herald that he had distanced himself from Clonaid since its founding but expected the company to make money and to ultimately create eternal life.

"It's a commercial company and her goal is to make as much money as possible, and I hope she will make as much money as possible," Vorilhon said of Boisselier.

Vorilhon said he does not know the identity of the alleged cloned baby or her American mother.

He said scientists may develop technology within 25 years to create a full-grown human clone in hours and to "upload" the contents of a person's brain into the clone.

"It's a very beautiful step, but it's just a step," Vorilhon told the Herald, referring to the alleged cloning of Eve.

"The ultimate goal is to give eternal life to humanity through cloning."

Vorilhon had his hair in a topknot and was dressed in what the Herald described as "white, space-age clothing from head to toe."

He told the Herald that Raelians are at the vanguard of science and philosophy.

"The problem is that you have men of today with tomorrow's technology and yesterday's philosophy," he said.

"People are lost and misguided by primitive religions...they are trying to slow down science. Nothing can stop science."

DNA samples taken

DNA samples to determine if Eve is a clone of her mother were taken on Tuesday.

Boisselier authorized ABC television science editor Michael Guillen and a team of experts to test whether Eve really was cloned from the skin cells of her mother.

Blood samples taken from the mucus membranes inside the mouth of mother and child are enough to make a genetic profile of both.

DNA forms the basic material in the chromosomes of the cell nucleus, and contains the genetic code transmitting a person's hereditary pattern.

Reuters, AFP

E-mail: pr_saturday_special@inquirer.com.ph

SATURDAY Special

Editor **Nestor U. Torre** ◎ Associate Editor **Edmund L. Sicam**

DICAPRIO (center) plays a con man who successfully passes himself off as an airplane pilot, among other bogus occupations, in Steven Spielberg's "Catch Me If You Can."

DiCaprio stars in two big movies

By Douglas J. Rowe

NEW YORK—Why not begin where most other interviewers want to, Leonardo DiCaprio suggests.

"They want to know about where I went last night," he jokes.

Much of what's been written about the "Titanic" heartthrob since he crowed "I'm king of the world!" in the top-grossing film of all time has focused on his personal life.

No specifics

He's finally able to shrug off the gossip-column reports, he says (veering away from specifics of where he went last night).

"I don't know how many people notice, but I never go on a podium and try to clear up stories," he says, suggesting that tales of his off-screen life have the accuracy of a game of telephone.

"The only thing you can really do as an actor to retain your position is to just keep working and do what you do and have that reflect on who you are. If you want to know what

DICAPRIO/ C2

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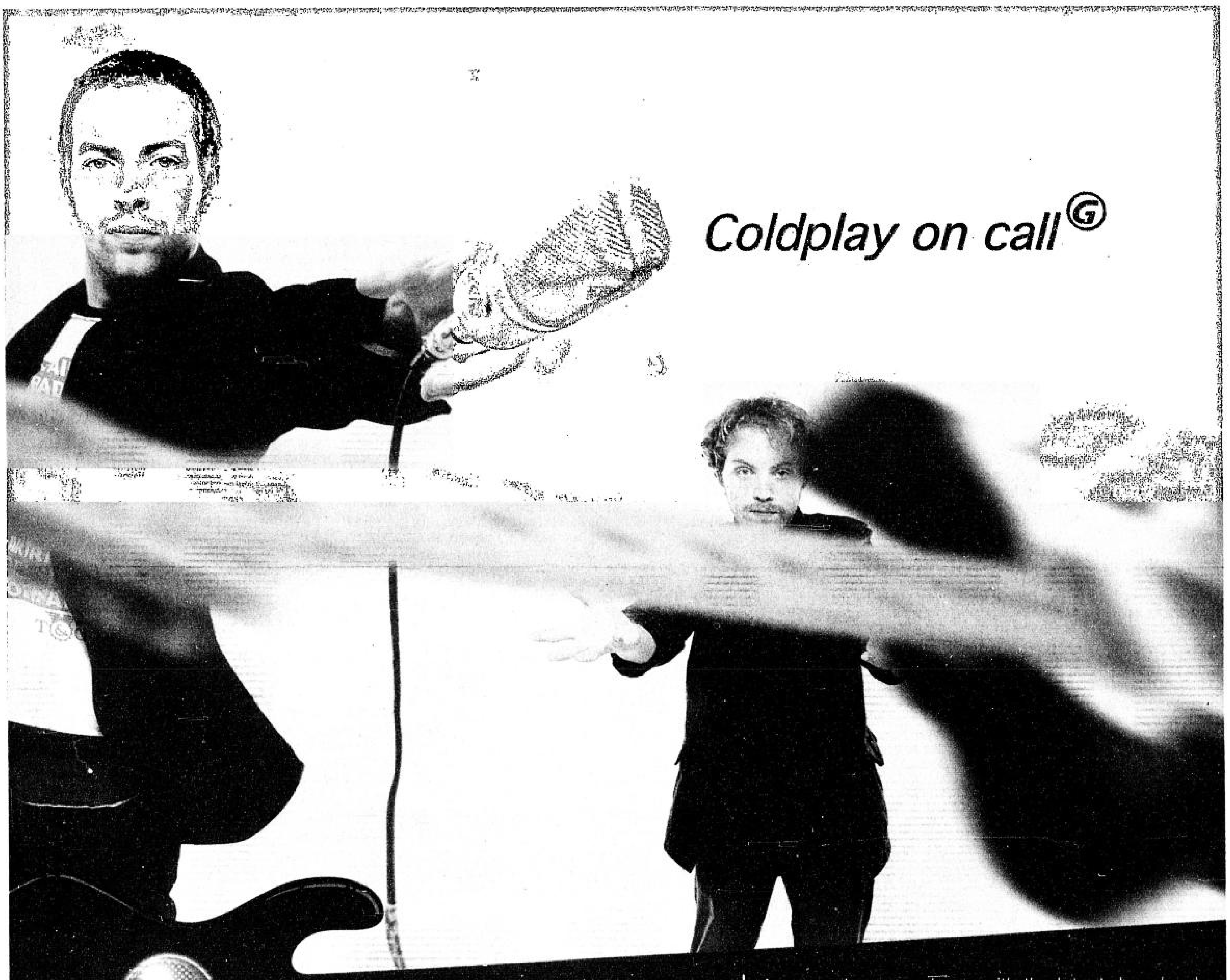

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Puddle of Mudd	She Hates Me	shehatesme
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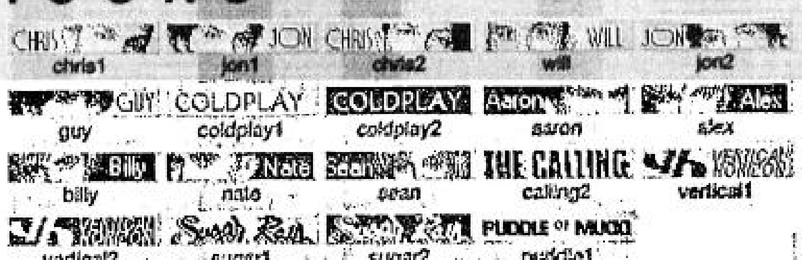

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'Dekada '70' is Metro filmfest's finest movie

BEFORE we got to see "Dekada '70," we were told by some colleagues that it wasn't "as good as expected." So, when we watched the film, we were prepared for a less than enthralling experience.

Well, we were enthralled.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Important contribution

More than that, we were moved. And we valued the film's important contribution to the very urgent task of reminding everyone of the trauma in our collective lives that was the martial law period of the '70s.

But first, that "not as good as expected" quibble. Yes, we felt that the film sometimes tended to focus too much on the family that was its collective protagonist. It could have given more of a background to those years, particularly for younger viewers who don't know much about that period's notorious villains and brave heroes.

Also, some lines towards the end of the script tended to be too explicatory and hortatory, making viewers feel like they were being lectured to. And there are some lose ends that the movie fails to connect or tie up because it has put too many principal characters in play to insightfully keep track of all of them.

SANTOS. Her performance is both powerful and sensitive.

Quibbles

Having said that, however, we must conclude that all those negative notes are really just quibbles, because seen as a whole, "Dekada '70" succeeds in its major tasks—to remind everyone of the horror of the '70s, and to limn the self-actualization of its female protagonist, played by Vilma Santos

Although it's occasionally didactic, Lualhati Bautista's script tackles an impressive range of issue relevant to the '70s, and to female empowerment.

For his part, director Chito Roño surpasses his past works with this production, because he's finally found material important and challenging enough to push his talent to its limit. Aside from thematic significance, his direction evinces personal insight and commitment.

Cinematic mural

In his hands, "Dekada '70" is transformed from its origins as a novel, into a veritable cinematic mural of those years of national turmoil and trauma that continue to negatively affect the country to this day.

The hope is that Roño's film will provide the occasion for the country to get over its bad case of self-induced national amnesia, and come to terms not only with what was, but also with what needs to be done to make sure that the evil of those years can never hold sway again.

Portrayal

On point of performance, Vilma Santos' portrayal of the mother of the family in the film is not just powerful, but also sensitively limned. Since her character starts out as traditionally aquiescent and clueless, it takes her years to realize that the life she's been living isn't her own—and that she doesn't want to live such a subservient life anymore.

When it comes to her politicization, it happens even more gradually, and it takes the imprisonment and torture of one son, and the death of another, to shock her into profound anger and action.

Santos' performance is so vivid and insightful that we can see her changing in front of our very eyes, from passive wife and mother, into a Mother Courage for the '70s—and beyond.

The gospel of pain and surrender according to Rio Diaz-Cojuangco

(Conclusion)

RIO has learned that the more excruciating the pain, the more she needs God to take it away from her. In other words, she precisely needs pain for her to seek God and allow Him to do His will in her life.

FACE TO FACE

Inday Badiday

Human strength

For many years, according to Rio, she's been through a lot of pain. But she winged it—she bore it all using her own human strength and self-perceived, bloated abilities. It was when she couldn't take the pain anymore that she was left with no other choice but look to God for help.

And, she said, it was after realizing this that she's now able to embrace all her pain with joy. There's the physical pain caused by the cancerous cells in her body. There's the emotional pain from knowing that, in all probability, she'll never see her kids finish school. And there's the pain that comes from causing pain to the people she loves most—her family.

But Rio has learned how to surrender all her pains to God, and everything is alright. She explained it all to me in words that were so simple yet so powerful:

She said something like, "When we surrender our pains to the Lord, sometimes, He takes them all away and you are cured. But sometimes, He doesn't take them away. Instead, He grants you the grace to bear them and be joyful in the burden.

"When this happens, you are not cured—but you are healed. And you are able to live the rest of your life from moment to moment, from glory to glory, with gladness in your heart—knowing that every minute you breathe is a gift from Him who gave you life and everything in it."

Amazing faith

Such amazing faith! I'm truly humbled by the immensity of Rio's belief in the Lord, and by the way she lives out her convictions.

Remember that dinner we had with the Cojuangcos in Pontevedra? Rio's children, Claudia and Miguel, sang to her their own inimitable and even more plaintive version of "Only You," the love song originally sung by The Platters.

As they were singing, a thought crossed my mind: Such a shame that these children are going to live the rest of their lives knowing that their mom won't be there anymore.

But then, Rio joined them in the song, and I realized that the children weren't just singing the song to their mother—the three of them were singing it to God. And the first thought was immediately expunged from my mind.

It was replaced by another thought: Such a blessing that these children are going to live the rest of their lives knowing that their mom shall live forever—in God's loving embrace.

Only you can make this world seem right
Only you can make the darkness bright
Only you and you alone
Can thrill me like you do
And fill my heart with love for only you.

Only you can make this change in me
For it's true you are my destiny
When you hold my hand I understand
The magic that you do
You're my dream come true.
My one and only you.

SWITCHING CHANNELS

2002, the year television became a life-saver

By Edmund L. Sicam

2002 was the year the boob tube became the movie industry's life-saver. With ticket sales for local productions dwindling because of piracy and the influx of big-budgeted Hollywood productions, actors and directors trooped to television studios to earn a living.

Some actors and directors who previously would not be caught dead in a TV soap swallowed their pride for economic reasons. Character actors benefited the most, landing roles in several soaps. Action stars got less physically-challenging roles in sitcoms.

Creative juices

Some would rationalize their move as a way of improving their craft. Taping two or three times a week allowed them to keep their creative juices flowing. Whatever the reason, this was fine and dandy for the two leading networks, since they managed to produce star-studded shows that kept the ratings up. The better to attract advertisers who also became very selective in their choice of where to air their commercials.

Soaps from Latin America did not lose their luster. They continued to fill the airwaves and gave local dubbers reason to celebrate. Chin Chin Gutierrez provided star power to the dubbing business by providing the voice for Betty La Fea.

Realizing the potency of dubbed programs, GMA substituted Tagalog dialogue for some foreign movies, while ABS-CBN did the same for a regular action series.

2002 was also the year the rivalry between ABS-CBN and GMA intensified. If we are to believe GMA executives, they are fast closing in on the Star Network—which, for a long time now, has been the undisputed industry leader.

AUNOR. Stars in Channel 2's "Bituin" soap opera.

With the change of management, GMA's new bosses were no longer happy being a strong second placer. They wanted GMA to retain its premier position when ABS-CBN top executive Freddie Garcia was running the show at GMA.

In terms of star value, the Star Network lived up to its name by signing up major names: the Diamond Star, Maricel Soriano; the Megastar Sharon Cuneta, the Superstar, Nora Aunor; and the Star for All Seasons, Vilma Santos.

Add to them biggies like Robin Padilla, Cesar Montano and Aga Muhlach. The only name not in that list is Fernando Poe, Jr., who has yet to do a regular TV series. However, ABS-CBN was able to get FPJ's movies, which still command a wide following.

Noontime slot

As far as the noontime slot is concerned, however, GMA's "Eat Bulaga" continued to trounce ABS-CBN's "Magandang Tanghali Bayan." One strong factor in the popularity of "Eat Bulaga" was the strong showing of the Sex Bomb Girls, who became a hot property not only on TV but also on the live show circuit, recording, and the movies.

The girls managed to do the impossible—combining both sexy and "wholesome" image in their dance and song numbers. Some civic groups don't agree, saying that the girls provide a bad example for young viewers.

"Eat Bulaga's" popularity stems from its constantly changing roster of game segments. Only about 10 to 20 percent of the show is devoted to musical numbers. The other segments offer prizes for studio and home contestants.

The most popular is the "Laban o Bawi" portion which regularly offers P1 million as a top prize. One segment patterned after the "Fear Factor" series got high ratings but also elicited strong complaints, forcing the producers to shift to a more physically-oriented gimmick.

Game shows

At the start of the year, game shows started to proliferate with the success of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" As expected, the number dwindled towards the end of the year as viewers tired of the format. "WBAM" reduced its frequency.

"The Weakest Link" is now airing replays with Edu Manzano, who quit after a contract dispute and was replaced by Allan K, who either quit or was removed after a few months. ABC-5's "Wheel of Fortune" stopped turning while "The Family Feud" is now aired only once a week, as well as "The Price is Right." Only Kris Aquino's daily "Game KNB" seems to have survived the slump.

Television should continue to attract more viewers in 2003. With the economic slowdown and the security problems facing the country, many viewers will probably just stay home and become couch potatoes.

DiCaprio . . .

From page C1

I've been doing or what I've been up to, there it is up on screen."

Scorsese's film

And right now that's Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" and Steven Spielberg's "Catch Me If You Can."

Both are hitting cineplexes about the same time, mainly because "Gangs" was delayed at least a year. DiCaprio began working on "Gangs" almost three years ago, so it only seems "like some big resurgence of me out there." *AP*

YOUR WEEKLY TV GUIDE FROM JAN 4-JAN 10

CH	2	4	5	[illegible]	9	[illegible]	23	29	[illegible]
[illegible]	5:30 Magandang Gabi, Bayan 7:00 Arriba, Arriba 8:30 Bida si Mister, Bida si Misis 9:30 FPJ Action Cinema 11:00 "F" 11:30 Sports Unlimited	6:00 Fox News 11:00 Business and Leisure	7:00 Sailormoon Sailor Stars 7:30 Family Feud 8:30 Wow Mali! 9:30 Saturday Night Specials 11:30 Star Trek Voyager	6:00 Dragon Ball Z 6:30 Imbestigador 7:30 Idol Ko Si Kap 8:30 Kakabakaba 9:30 Blockbuster Cinema 11:30 Master Showman	6:00 Hot Ticket 6:30 Entertainment Tonite 7:00 Largo 8:00 7 Days 9:00 Saturday Night Playhouse	7:00 Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? 8:00 Star For A Night 9:00 Viva Box Office 11.00 Kagat ng Dilim	6:00 Travel Time 6:30 The Beast Machines 7:00 Game Plan 7:30 7th Heaven 8:30 Boston Public 9:30 Studio 23 Presents 11:30 Reel Deal	7:00 Xclusive Cinema Special 9:00 Oras Ng Katotohanan 9:30 Armor of God 10:00 Oh Tokyo 11:00 Pinoy Wrestling	6:00 CBS Evening News 6:30 E! Coming Attractions 7:00 E! News Weekend 8:00 Smart presents Merry Texmas on E! 10:00 David Letterman
[illegible]	5:30 Sharon 7:00 Wansapanataym 8:30 Home Along Da Riles 9:30 Sunday Family Cinemas 11:30 Off The Record 12:00 The Weekend News	8:00 The Working President 9:00 Fox News 11:00 Unlimited Driving	6:00 Zorro 6:30 Guyferd 7:00 Price Is Right 8:00 Sing-Galing 9:00 The Big Night 11:00 Speed	5:30 Partners Mel & Jay 7:00 KI 8:30 The Great Globe Adventure 9:00 Daddy Di Do Du 10:00 Sunday Night Box Office 11:30 Che-Che Lazaro Presents	6:00 Entertainment This Weekend 7:00 Ripley's Believe It or Not 8:00 Match TV 9:00 Sunday's Big Event 11:00 Road Trip	6:00 PBA Games 8:00 Sinemaks 9:30 Viva's Hot Hits 11.00 El Shaddai	6:00 Invasion America 6:30 Digital Tour 7:00 Exposed 8:00 Yes Dear 8:30 Just Shoot Me 9:00 Will & Grace 9:30 The West Wing 10:30 Scariest Places on Earth 11:30 News Central	7:00 Sunday Mini-Series 8:00 Oh Tokyo 9:00 Sunday Night movies	6:00 CBS Evening News 6:30 E! Coming Attractions 7:00 Rank 8:00 Smart presents Merry Texmas on E! 10:00 Celebrity (Fox)
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[illegible]	6:00 TV Patrol 6:30 Game K N B? 7:00 Bituin 7:30 Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay 8:00 Sa Puso ko, Iingatan Ka 8:30 Sa Dulo ng Walang Hanggan 9:00 OK Fine! Whatever 10:30 Headlines 11:00 Pipol	6:00 Fox News 8:00 TeleDyaryo 10:00 Fora Medica 11:00 Auto Focus	6:00 Balitang-Balita 6:30 Dragon League 7:00 2 Years Vacation w/ Dinosaurs 7:30 Kool on Kam 8:30 E.R. 9:30 Urban Doktor 10:00 The Big News 10:30 Mad TV	6:00 Frontpage 6:30 Habang Kapiling Ka 7:00 Ang Iibigin Ay Ikaw 7:30 Sana Ay Ikaw Na Nga 8:00 Kung Mawawala Ka 8:30 Magpakailanman 9:00 Kool Ka Lang 10:30 Saksi 11:00 Probe Team	5:30 Arangkada Xtra Balita 6:00 Sin Tl 6:30 Real TV 7:00 Ed 8:00 Ally McBeal 9:00 The Practice 10:00 Newswatch Now 10:30 Entertainment Tonight	6:00 Carita de Angel 7:00 Crayon Shin Chan 8:00 Kurochan 9:00 The Weakest Link 10:00 Diwa 11:00 IBC News 11:30 Travel and Trade	6:00 The Three Stooges 6:30 Starship Troopers 7:00 Batman Beyond 7:30 Samurai X 8:00 Dawson's Creek 9:00 Smallville 10:00 News Central 10:30 Oprah 11:30 Twilight Zone	6:30 Q Showcase 7:30 Oras ng Katotohanan 8:00 Ang Dating Daan	6:00 CBS Evening News 6:30 E! News Live 7:00 Extreme Close Up 7:30 Mysteries and Scandals 8.00 Smart presents Merry Texmas on E! 10:00 David Letterman 11.00 Wild On
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2002 Metro filmfest is more trouble-prone

By Nestor U. Torre

SOME organizers of the 2002 Metro Manila filmfest are trying to pooh-pooh the controversies currently swirling around the festival by saying that this sort of thing happens every year, but is quickly settled or forgotten. Well, we don't know about that.

Problems

The 2002 festival appears to be more trouble-prone. Its problems started early, when the script contest it sponsored preferred projects that had producers attached to them.

This effectively left new scriptwriters with no connections in the industry out in the cold, negating the festival's avowed wish to develop fresh talents. For this reason, we declined the invitation to serve as a judge in the scriptwriting tilt.

But we held off from coming to any early conclusions about how the festival would go, thinking it fairer to give the filmfest a chance to get its act together. We would wait until we saw the final festival entries before making up our minds.

Still, along the way, we were bothered by the filmfest's watered-down criteria, which stressed not only artistic quality, but also "commercial viability" and promotion of positive Filipino values. We're all for positive themes, but watered-down criteria can lead to confusion in choosing entries that are truly deserving.

Fears

It turned out that our fears in this regard weren't fanciful, because when the official entries were announced, some of them were more "commercially viable" than anything else.

PRESIDENT Arroyo gave cash incentives to the 2002 filmfest's official entries—to diminished effect.

The number of official entries also turned out to be a problem. It was agreed that there would be seven, but Mother Lily complained so it was made nine, and then other producers threatened a boycott, so the final compromise was seven now, then two more starting Jan. 1. Everybody happy? Uh, not quite.

Rules

Observers worried that rules were made only to be broken, and that this subjectivity could lead to more problems in the future. True enough, when viewers saw the entries, they were disappointed to discover that, despite their big budgets, the majority of the movies weren't of festival *quality*.

This diminished the impact of the substantial cash incentive each official entry received from a fund provided by no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Then came the awards night and the victory of "Mano Po" over "Dekada '70," a decision that some people, this writer included, dispute. When the names of the filmfest jurors were announced, some of them were also deemed not of festival quality.

The imbroglio involving the nonmentions for nomination of writer Lualhati Bautista and cinematographer Neil Daza was ironically bemusing, because the filmfest is traditionally notorious for nominating *everybody*. One non-mention of Bautista could be attributable to error, but two? No wonder the "Dekada '70" people staged a sympathy walkout.

Questionable

Some awards were deemed questionable by some, like Ara Mina being hailed as Best Actress over the clearly superior performance of Vilma Santos.

All these imbroglios are patently not "business as usual" for the annual festival, so industry people who don't belong to the filmfest leadership should objectively evaluate what's happened, make the appropriate recommendations, and seek improvements or redress.

In addition, viewers who've seen the filmfest movies should also express their opinions about them, one way or the other. After all, when a festival ostensibly for quality films fails to deliver, the major losers are the members of the audience. That's you, folks!

Shaina Magdayao comes into her own

By Mary Ann A. Bautista

A FEW years back, Shaina Magdayao was billed as Vina Morales' kid sister; now, she has an identity all her own. She gained acceptance and recognition when she top-billed the soap "Marinella" with Camille Prats and Serena Dalrymple two years ago. Now, she's being paired with Jolo Revilla in "Agimat."

Studies

Though her show biz commitments take up much of her time, she prioritizes her studies. Shaina diligently attends her classes at Our Lord's Grace Montessori, where she's a freshman in high school.

She makes sure that she pays equal attention to her career and classes. All her show biz commitments are scheduled after school. If she has to tape for a TV show, she brings her assignments to the set. She also obediently follows the rules at home.

"I do my homework until 10 p.m., then I sleep and rest. I take care of my health because I'm also into sports." Swimming, golf, volleyball and chess take up her free time because she also competes in her school's sportsfests.

Respectful

Shaina doesn't have a star complex. She's just one pretty, ordinary girl—even simpler, more humble and respectful than some other kids around. She doesn't forget to say "*opo*" and "*po*" when she talks to older people.

At home, she enjoys watching VCDs, DVDs and laser discs. Her favorite films are horror flicks, and she singles out "The Matrix," "Scream 3," and "Mission Impossible 2." as must-see films.

Being the youngest in her family, she admits that she's not comfortable in the kitchen—but she *can* prepare scrambled eggs for breakfast.

MAGDAYAO. No star complex.

Noodles

"*Dati, nung nagpunta kami sa* States, *nag*-demonstrate *din si Ate* Vina *kung paano magluto ng* noodles. *Medyo takot ako sa mantika kaya hindi ako nagluluto.*" But she'd like to learn how to cook her favorite dishes: porkchop, *sinigang* and *adobo*.

She idolizes Sharon Cuneta, Maricel Soriano, and Vilma Santos because they can portray any role given to them. "*Magaling silang umarte. Puwede silang magpaiyak, magpatawa o maging suplada sa pelikula. Sana maging ganoon din ako kagaling balang araw!*"

'Lastikman' is underrated but delivers

By Edmund L. Sicam

THE MOST underrated film in the 2002 Metro Manila Film Festival is "Lastikman." When the 10 entries for the festival were announced several months ago, people were saying Vic Sotto's movie would be the first to be eliminated.

As it turned out, the movie, as well as "Spirit Warriors: The Shortcut," didn't make it to the initial list of seven finalists. But after protests and counter-protests that rocked the yearly festival, the two made it to the festival, but could only be shown starting last Jan. 1.

Star value

Why did the two not make it to the first seven? It's probably because they were the ones with the least star value. Vic Sotto has his following but it's nowhere near that of FPJ or Dolphy. The Streetboys aren't matinee idols. Well, Danilo Barrios and Vhong Navarro are on their way to the top, but they still have a long way to go.

It's ironic that "Spirit Warriors" was chosen the filmfest's third best film by the board of judges, while those who decided which films could join the festival ranked it way below. It just supports my theory that the festival committee preferred entries that had bankable stars.

If the members had only looked at the record books, they would have been impressed by the showing of the first "Spirit Warriors" at the box office. If I'm not mistaken, the movie was in the Top Three.

"LASTIKMAN" stars Donita Rose and Vic Sotto.

I've seen the latest version and I have a feeling it will attract even more viewers because the special effects are more impressive than the first production's.

The special effects of "Lastikman" are nothing to sneeze at, either. I admit that when I watched this movie, I didn't expect much by way of visual magic since it was not produced by a big studio. I was wrong. The special effects are quite impressive. Unlike "Agimat" where the action takes place in a confined space, "Lastikman" uses various landmarks in Manila to display its visual magic.

Destruction

The destruction of the Post Office building, for instance, was believable. Vic Sotto swinging from the top of the Manila City Hall was breathtaking. Then there are the scenes showing Lastikman's flexible arms and malleable body.

The movie also attempts to humanize its superhero by showing how, as a young man, he was always being bullied, and how a wayward meteor crashed into a rubber tree and and the dripping latex turned Oyoboy Sotto (as the young Vic Sotto) into Lastikman.

His nemesis, played by Jeffrey Quizon, is first portrayed as a likeable fellow who idolizes Lastikman, but later turns against him.

Sure, these are reminiscent of "Spiderman." Jeffrey's character even has a gadget similar to that used by Spiderman's opponent. But at least, there was an attempt to humanize the superhero and not just concentrate on his super-exploits.

Donita Rose plays Vic's romantic interest, but she is merely the icing on the cake. There simply is not enough room for her to shine.

Vic Sotto is a down-to-earth Lastikman, He doesn't look like a superhero at all. Even when he dons his costume, he still looks fragile and comical. That makes him all the more attractive to the audience, because he looks like an ordinary person.

Michael V has his moments as the bumbling TV reporter we regular see on "Bubble Gang." He provides most of the comedy in the movie.

Songs about falling in and out of love

By Leia Torre

"YOU Had Me at Hello . . ." is an album of 17 tracks performed by 17 different artists. The songs are all about love, but not all of them have a positive opinion of it.

The songs: "Someday We'll Know" by Mandy Moore and Jonathan Foreman, "Insensitive" by Jann Arden, "I'll Be" by Edwin McCain, "Waiting in Vain" by Annie Lennox, "Brick" by Ben Folds Five, Cool With You" by Jennifer Love Hewitt, "Galileo" by Indigo Girls, "You Were There" by Babyface, "Tattoed on My Mind" by D'Sound, "Sway" by Bic Runga, "Always You" by Sophie Zelmani, "Sunny Came Home" by Shawn Colvin, "Lullaby" by Shawn Mullins, "As I Lay Me Down" by Sophie B. Hawkins, "Last Chance" by Allure, "Leaving on a Jet Plane" by Chantal Kreviazuk, and "I'm Missing You" by Meja.

The artists are an eclectic group, ranging from pop soloists like Moore to groups with a jazzy style like D'Sound. The songs are very different from each other, because their performers espouse various musical genres.

Betrayal

For example, "Insensitive" by Jann Arden confronts the issue of betrayal. But, for all its angst, there is still a hint of irony in the song, because the singer is asking for advice from the same person who caused her problem in the first place.

In contrast, "I'll Be," by Edwin McCain, is about dedication. With lyrics like 'I'll be your crying shoulder/I'll be love's suicide/I'll be better when I'm older/I'll be the greatest event of your life," how else can this song be classified but as an anthem to commitment?

A song about a person's reluctance to fall in love is "Sway" by Bic Runga. It lists all the possible pitfalls a person in love can fall into.

The song is easy to relate to, because almost everyone who has been in love has gone through the sweaty, sudden shyness attacks that suddenly come at the very time you very badly want to appear cool.

Contrast is provided by "Last Chance" by Allure. While "Sway" talks about finding love, "Last Chance" is about being on the verge of losing it.

"Someday We'll Know" is the most hopeful cut, without the angst, regret and hopelessness that characterize some of the other songs.

The album offers something for everyone in various stages of falling in and out of love!

The meaning of Christmas

From page C4

and cold of the changing seasons, we must learn to tolerate the variable conditions of this material world.

M-Magnanimity of heart is the reason Jesus came to share with us the greatest gift of love for God. He came with this most valuable gift. Do we receive it with open hearts or do we reject it and turn to the material gifts that we buy in stores?

A-Austerity is an act of sacrifice. Loving means practicing austerity because we want to do something nice for the person we love. As a mother accepts all sorts of difficulties in raising her child, a loving servant of God undergoes all sorts of austerities in the performance of his loving service to the Lord.

S-Submissiveness to God's will is the teaching of Jesus with his words and life. There is no desire to be independent of God. Rather, there is complete surrender and acceptance of God as our total refuge and shelter.

Email Lotuspond108@hotmail.com

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PER DTI-NCR PERMIT NO. 5056 SERIES OF 2002

'Mano Po' is admirable but limited in scope

GARCIA. Plays patriarch of wealthy and powerful Chinese family.

By Nestor U. Torre

THANKS to producer Mother Lily Monteverde and director Joel Lamangan for giving Chinese-Filipinos their due in "Mano Po." The film dramatizes the complex relationships between the members of a powerful family headed by a patriarch (Eddie Garcia) who started out as a young cook from Fujian, China, and subsequently made a fortune that he used to influence top officials in the Philippines.

Daughter and son

In the process, he and his Filipino wife (Boots Anson-Roa) reared a daughter (Amy Austria) and a son (Tirso Cruz III), who sired three daughters of his own (Maricel Soriano, Kris Aquino and Ara Mina).

Maricel ends up running the Gó family's corporation, because Kris is deemed too soft and Ara too flighty to be depended on. Fact is, much of the movie focuses on Ara, because her character is made to follow the "Rosebud" line—undercover agent, romance with her NBI handler (Richard Gomez), wild behavior designed to shock her ultra-traditional and conservative family, etc.

It's Ara and her aunt (Amy) who are able to go beyond the confines of her Chinese family's restrictions and interact with Filipinos. They may be the least favored of the Gos, but they point the way to the future, when all of the Chinese living here will realize that the Philippines is not just the place where they make (a lot of) money, but is also their chosen homeland.

Complex subject matter

Unfortunately, the film chooses to concentrate on the drug and kidnapping elements related to the Chinese presence in this country. This is a good commercial move, but it limits the movie's scope too severely, and ends up doing an injustice to the important, complex and textured subject matter that is the Chinese presence in the Philippines. Well, maybe next film(s)?

On point of performance, the revelation here is Ara Mina, who finally junks all of her silly, sexy shticks from films past, and gives us a believable depiction of a tough but vulnerable person who symbolizes the younger Chinese in our midst who feel more of a need to become a part of the country of their grandparents' "commercial" choice.

Sadly, the credibility of Ara's character (not to mention the film itself) is compromised by her being made to attend her grandfather's 80th birthday celebration in an ultra-daring gown that's cut so low in the back that the top part of her fanny is shockingly revealed.

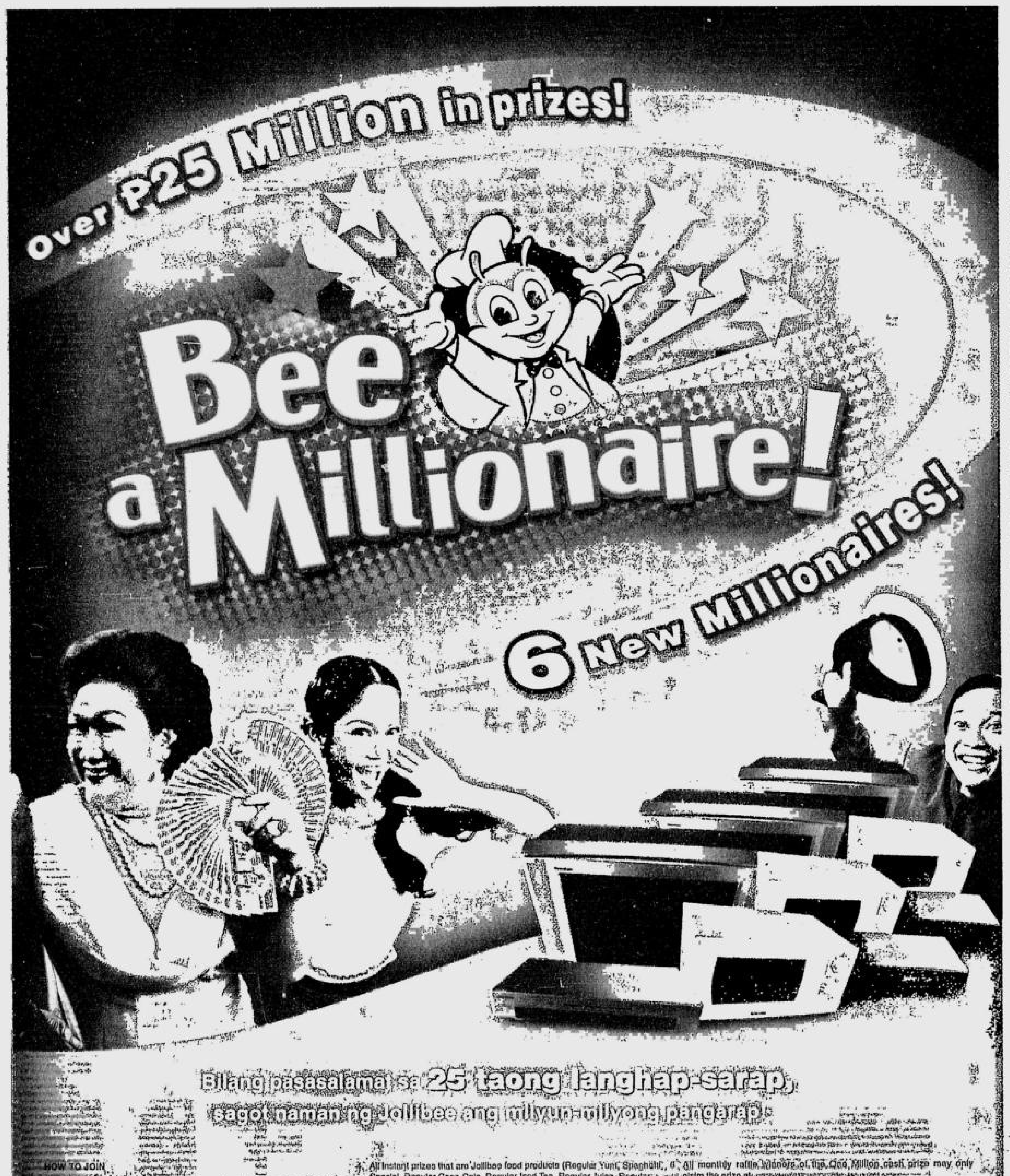
Shock value

Again, this is a good commercial gambit for the film, because shock value sells in these silly parts, but it makes her character too insensitive and even cruel to be believed. Also utterly unbelievable is the fact that her conservative family allows her to get away with it.

Among the movie's male performers, it's Tirso Cruz III who comes off best. He may have only a supporting part, but he is able to imbue it with a number of interesting and insightful layers. Other standouts include Austria, Aquino and Soriano (but her shiny lipstick is *so* distracting).

We also appreciate the movie's "Forrest Gump"-ish way of digitally inserting its principal characters in period- and influence-establishing TV footage. And its production values and occasional highlighting of Chinese customs and traditions.

The film may not do full justice to the complex subject matter of Fil-Chinese relations, but it's taken that all-important first step.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HOW TO JOIN

1. For every P125.00 food purchase (single receipt), the customer is entitled to one scratch card.

2. Valid for all store transactions: dine-in, take-out, drive-thru, delivery, kiddie parties, and bulk orders. Not included is the purchase of Gift Certificates. However, redemption of Gift Certificates at the store following the minimum food purchase entitles a customer to a scratch card.

3. To participate, the customer must present his/her receipt to the person manning the promo booth located inside the store. The receipt will then be stamped with "CLAIMED" to mark that the cards have already been claimed.

The customer gets the number of scratch cards that he/she is entitled to.

Example:	Food purchase requirement	P125.00
	Customer purchase	P400.00
	Equivalent scratch cards	3 pieces

4. Employees of Jollibee Foods Corporation, franchise-operated stores, advertising and PR agencies and their relatives up to the second degree of affinity or consanguinity are disqualified from joining the redemption and raffle promotion.

There are two ways to win:

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1. The customer can win an instant prize by scratching the four round slots on the scratch card. If the scratch card reveals three out of four slots with the same prize, he/she wins that prize.

2. The bigger portion of the perforated scratch card should then be surrendered at the counter to claim the instant prize. The smaller portion of the scratch card serves as the raffle entry and may be used to join the raffle.

3. Only winning scratch cards with authenticated security codes will be honored.

4. All instant prizes that are Jollibee food products (Regular Yum, Spaghetti Special, Regular Coca-Cola, Regular Iced Tea, Regular Juice, Regular French Fries, Pocket Pie, and 1 pc. Chickenjoy with Rice) may be claimed at any Jollibee store.

5. Redemption of products will be until 60 days from the end of promo.

MONTHLY RAFFLE

1. The customer must fill up the raffle coupon with his name, address, telephone number, and affix signature on the space provided and must drop this in the designated drop box inside the store. Deadline for dropping of entries is on the 20th of every month and raffle draw is on the 25th of each month.

INCLUSIVE DATES	DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES	RAFFLE DRAW	VENUE
January 1 - 20	January 20, 2003	January 25, 2003	TV Program TBA
Jan. 21 - Feb. 20	February 20, 2003	February 25, 2003	TV Program TBA
Feb. 21 - March 20	March 20, 2003	March 25, 2003	TV Program TBA

2. The non-winning entries of the previous months' draws will no longer be included in the succeeding monthly draws.

3. Raffle draws shall only be held with the supervision of a DTI representative in a nationwide TV program.

4. A participant can only win once in a draw. Should a person's name be drawn more than once during a monthly draw, he may only claim the bigger prize. However, he may again join the raffle for the succeeding months.

5. There will be 2 grand prize winners of P1,000,000.00, tax paid, per month: 1 winner from Metro Manila and another from outside Metro Manila. There will also be monthly consolation prizes allocated as follows:

25 units of Samsung 53.34cms (21") Color TV (13 for Metro Manila, 12 for provincial winners)
25 units of Samsung Microwave Oven (13 for Metro Manila, 12 for provincial winners)
25 units of Samsung DVD Player (13 for Metro Manila, 12 for provincial winners)

6. All monthly raffle winners of the One Million cash prize may only claim the prize at:

The Marketing Division
Jollibee Foods Corporation
10/F, Jollibee Plaza
#10 Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Center
Pasig City, Metro Manila

Provincial winners of Samsung appliances may claim their prize at the Jollibee store nearest to their address specified in the registered notice. Metro Manila winners of Samsung appliances can claim their prize at Jollibee Plaza.

7. Winners have to present at least two (2) valid identification cards such as driver's license, SSS, TIN, school or company ID, and birth certificate.

8. Winners will be notified through registered mail and their names posted on the stores' announcement posters. They will also be informed through telephone whenever possible. Travel expenses that may be incurred by winners in claiming their prize shall be to their account.

9. Prizes not claimed within sixty (60) days from notification date shall be forfeited with prior clearance from DTI.

10. Winners authorize Jollibee to disclose and publicize their names and other particulars in any mode or manner as Jollibee deems appropriate, whether they win an instant prize or win in the monthly draws.

Feeling Jollibee at 25 walang kasing sarap

Coca-Cola
SAMSUNG DIGITall
DELBROS

Affap raffle winners announced

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

THE ASSOCIATION of Former Flight Attendants of Philippine Airlines, Affap Foundation and the PAL Cabin Service inflight Center's joint Christmas Shindig last Dec. 20 was attended by Transportation Secretary Larry Mendoza, Gen. Adelberto Yap, ATO director and assistant secretary for DOTC, and about 600 active and retired flight attendants.

The raffle brought joy to an Ibanag who has been driving the shuttle service for PAL flight attendants since 1996. Raffle ticket no. 5318 was sold to Leonardo "Boyong" Cabolonga, 42, who has three bright children, one of whom is a scholar at UPLB, majoring in Applied Physics.

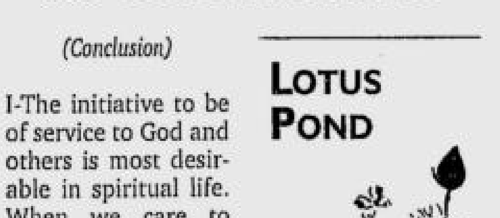
Boyong is very happy that he will have a vehicle that can give him additional income.

Present

Ticket no 1740, which I sold by long distance call to former flight attendant Susan Gonzales-Levinson, residing in Beverly Hills, California, won the Philips 29" color TV set.

The 11-cubic-foot refrigerator was won by former flight attendant Lira Patrimonio-Guilatco. The washing machine was won by Romel Juan.

Proceeds of the fundraising will go to numerous projects of the Affap Foundation, like giving financial aid to retired flight attendants with health problems and providing scholarships for their dependents. Happy New Year!

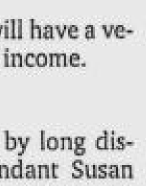


CABOLONGA (center) with Affap officers (from left), Mandy Navasero, Linda Lorenzo, Nena Jones, Cristy Romero-Altura, Greta Soriano-Lauron, Carmen Laman-Miciano and PAL line administrator Elsie Mil-Escutin.

The meaning of Christmas

(Conclusion)

LOTUS POND



R. Valencia and S. Bismark

I-The initiative to be of service to God and others is most desirable in spiritual life. When we care to please the Supreme Lord, we think of many ways to improve and increase the quality of our service. We please God by our eagerness to offer whatever resources we have.

Loving servant

As an excited child pleases his mother with little gifts, a loving servant pleases the Lord with his enthusiasm and devotion.

S-Sincerity is the key to spiritual advancement. When we are sincere in our desire to know and serve God, the Supreme Lord makes arrangements for us to come to Him. Sincerity means giving up all duplicity and diplomacy in our relationship with God and His representatives. We can have full trust in God and have no fear of being open to Him.

Changing seasons

T-Tolerance allow us to work and serve God regardless of the changing conditions and circumstances. Just as a tree tolerates the heat

THE MEANING/ C3

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Happy
New Year!

E-mail: pr_junior_inquirer@inquirer.com.ph

Junior INQUIRER

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 2003 ✦ 12 PAGES ✦ VOLUME 7, NUMBER 14

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WHAT'S INSIDE:

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- My Grade Four Days Page 5
- Story: New Year in Dapitan Page 6
- Shirley's Pets Page 12

One in Hope and Faith

A young Maranao Muslim writer and a young Filipino Chinese Catholic writer and their hopes for peace

> *"Hope means believing positively in something or someone."*
>
> **—Fatima, La Salle Academy, Iligan City**

DEAR Stanly,

Hi, how are you? I am Fatima Lucman of La Salle Academy here in Iligan City. I am 12 years old and I am a Muslim.

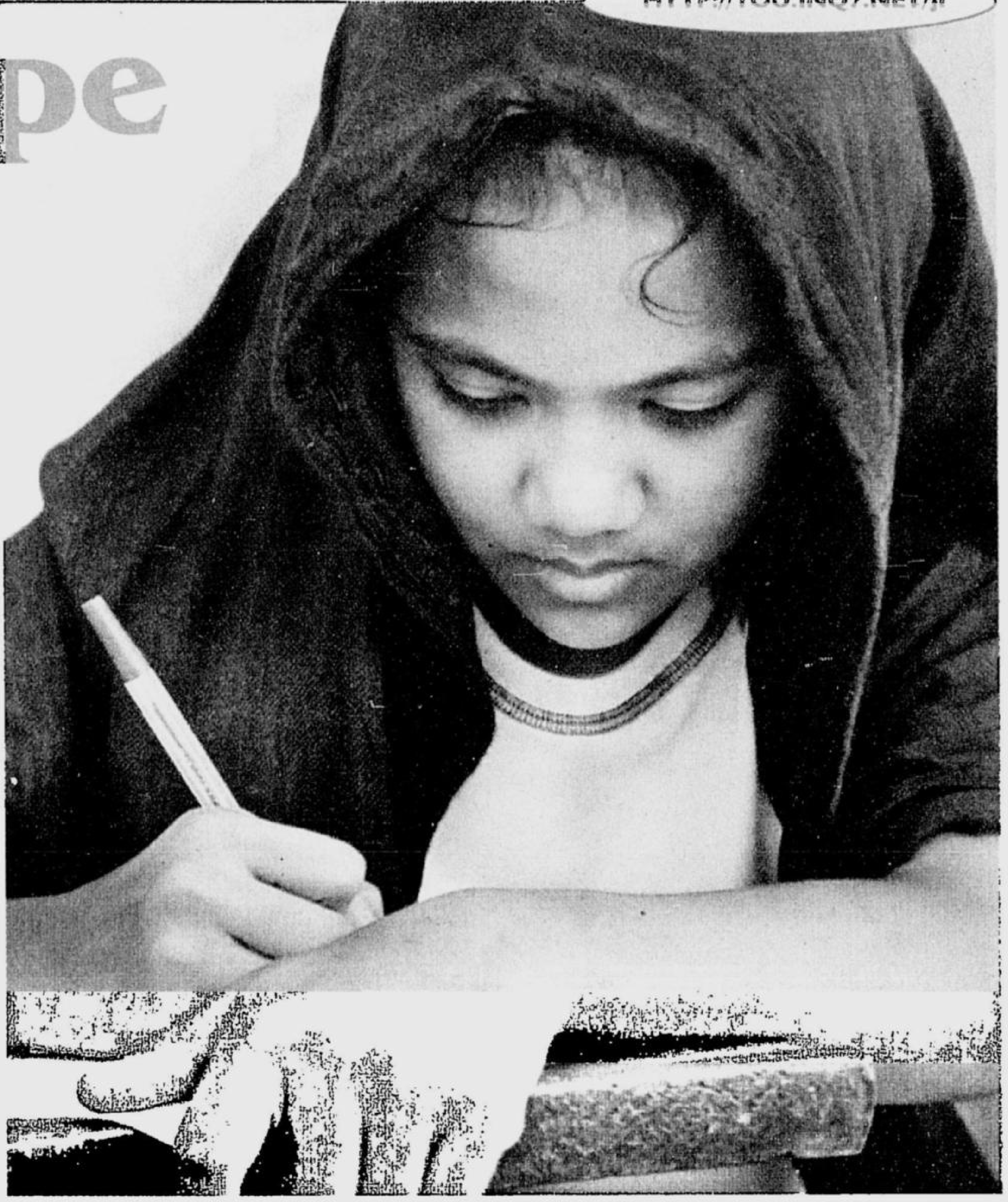
I know that we are different because of our cultures. You are a Christian, and I am a Muslim. Well, I just want to share with you some things about my religion, Islam and the culture of Maranao tribe.

Islam means a complete way of life. Some other tribes here in Southern Philippines also practice Islam. They are the Maranaos in Lanao, the Tausug in Zamboanga and the T'boli in Davao.

We celebrate Ramadhan every year for one month or 30 days. Ramadhan is the observance of fasting. It symbolizes our love, trust, believing in Allah.

After Ramadhan we celebrate Eid'el Fitr which ends Ramadhan celebration.

Dear Stanly/ p. 3



"I AM hoping some Christians will not treat us like we are very different from them," writes 12-year-old Fatima Lucman. BOBBY TIMONERA

Stanly, Xavier School, Metro Manila

DEAR Fatima,

Hello, how are you? I am Stanly and I study in Xavier School here in Manila. I am 12 years old, too and I am a Catholic.

I can't help but agree to the fact that we have differences but only due to our cultures.

We Christians celebrate the season with the start of Advent, which begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

> *"I hope our leaders would just calm down and talk together peacefully, reasonably, conscientiously and knowledgeably.*

Preparatory to the feast day, a novena is started on the 16th of December known as the Misa de Aguinaldo. These dawn masses came to be as an accommodation to the farmers who had to be on the fields at the crack of dawn.

On Christmas Eve, we have our Noche Buena, it is the time for family

Dear Fatima/ p. 3

World scope

Paris, France
Tokyo, Japan
Philadelphia, USA
Taipei, Taiwan

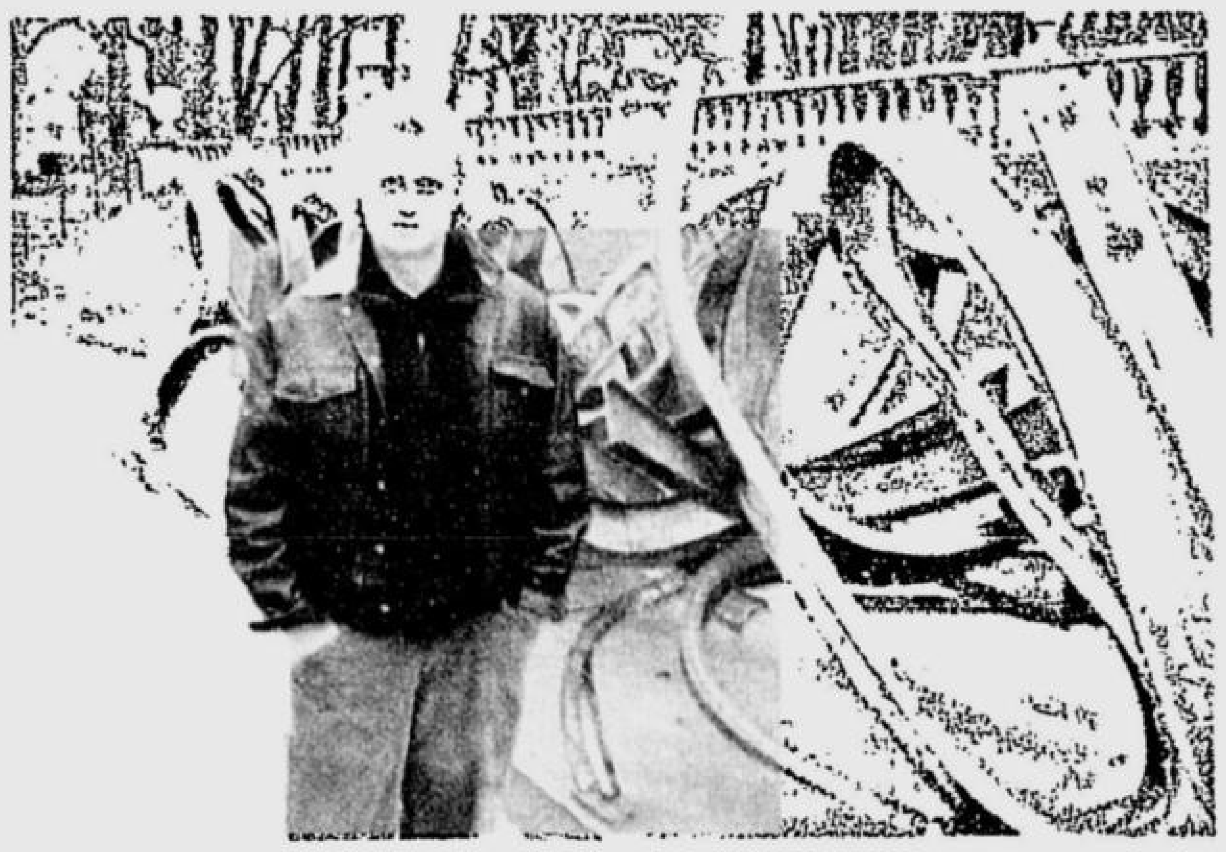
Mutt Mud Pack

THIS female papillon Rinzzie sure knows when she's being pampered. Here she sits quietly as she is covered in a Dead Sea mud pack during an esthetique skin and beauty treatment course for dogs at Pet Salon Jannie's in Tokyo. Sure beats rolling around in the dirt, huh? *Reuters*

Barbie's Pregnant Pal

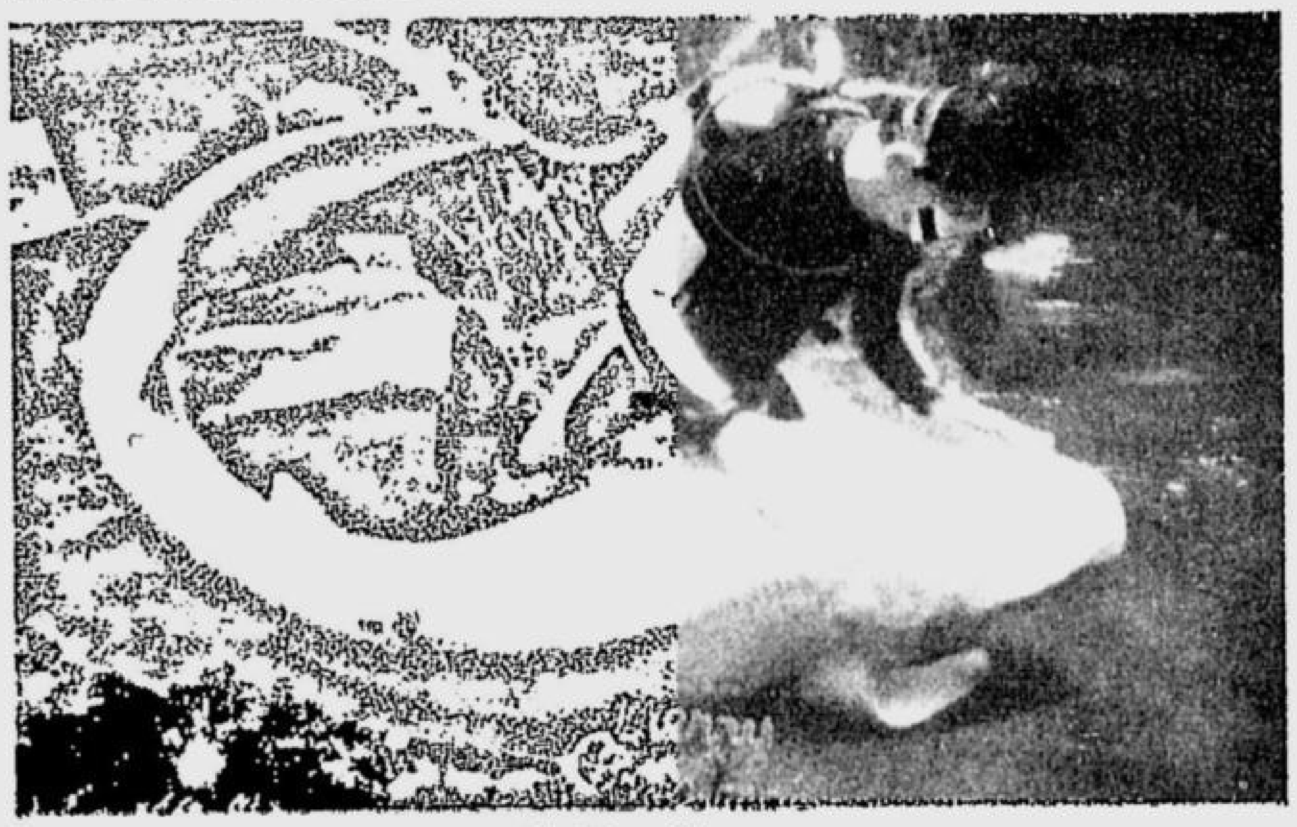
HERE'S a pregnant version of Midge, Barbie's oldest friend, which pops out a curled-up baby when her belly is opened. The doll, which some parents think is a little too real for their children, has been pulled from US grocery chains following complaints from customers. *AP*

From Sports to the Arts



FORMER French international rugby player Jean-Pierre Rives stands by his work during an exhibit at the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. In the 18 years since he left professional rugby, Rives has undergone a surprising late conversion—from blond bombshell of the oval ball he has become an acclaimed sculptor. *AFP*

TLC for a Nurse Shark



A DIVER takes care of a 3-meter nurse shark presented by Taipei Sea World. The shark was rescued from a local fisherman after its dorsal fin was cut off six years ago at Ilan harbor, northern Taiwan. More than a million sharks are killed each year for their fins, which is mainly used for soups in China and Hong Kong. *AFP*

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Dear Stanly...

(from page 1)

During Eid'el Fitr we first pray and then we eat and thank Allah.

I know we have different religions and culture but I guess we have some things in common, like our hopes for the future. Hope means believing positively in something or someone.

I know that you are also hoping that the Abu Sayyaf will mend and change their ways. That they will change their bad attitudes and start a new, happy, joyful life with their families without bringing misfortune to other people's lives. I know that like me, you also hope that they will eventually contribute good things to our country.

May I share with you my hopes for a better future of all Filipinos, Christian and Muslims alike?

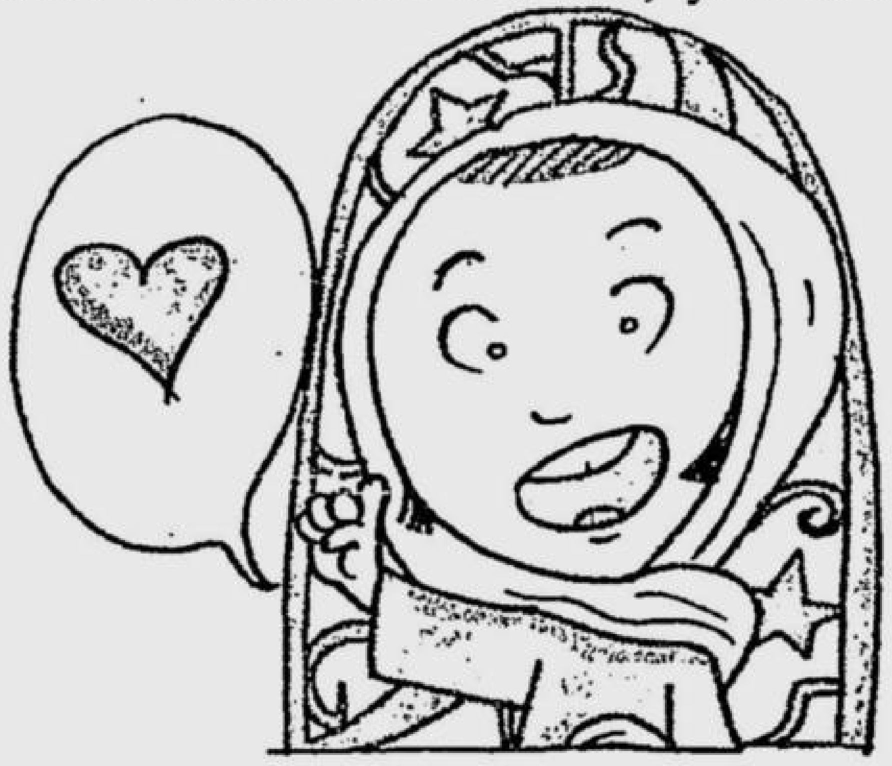
I am hoping some Christians will not treat us like we are very different from them. In my experience—just mine—a few of them laugh at us or make fun of us. We are also creations of God/Allah and we are all equal in the eyes of God.

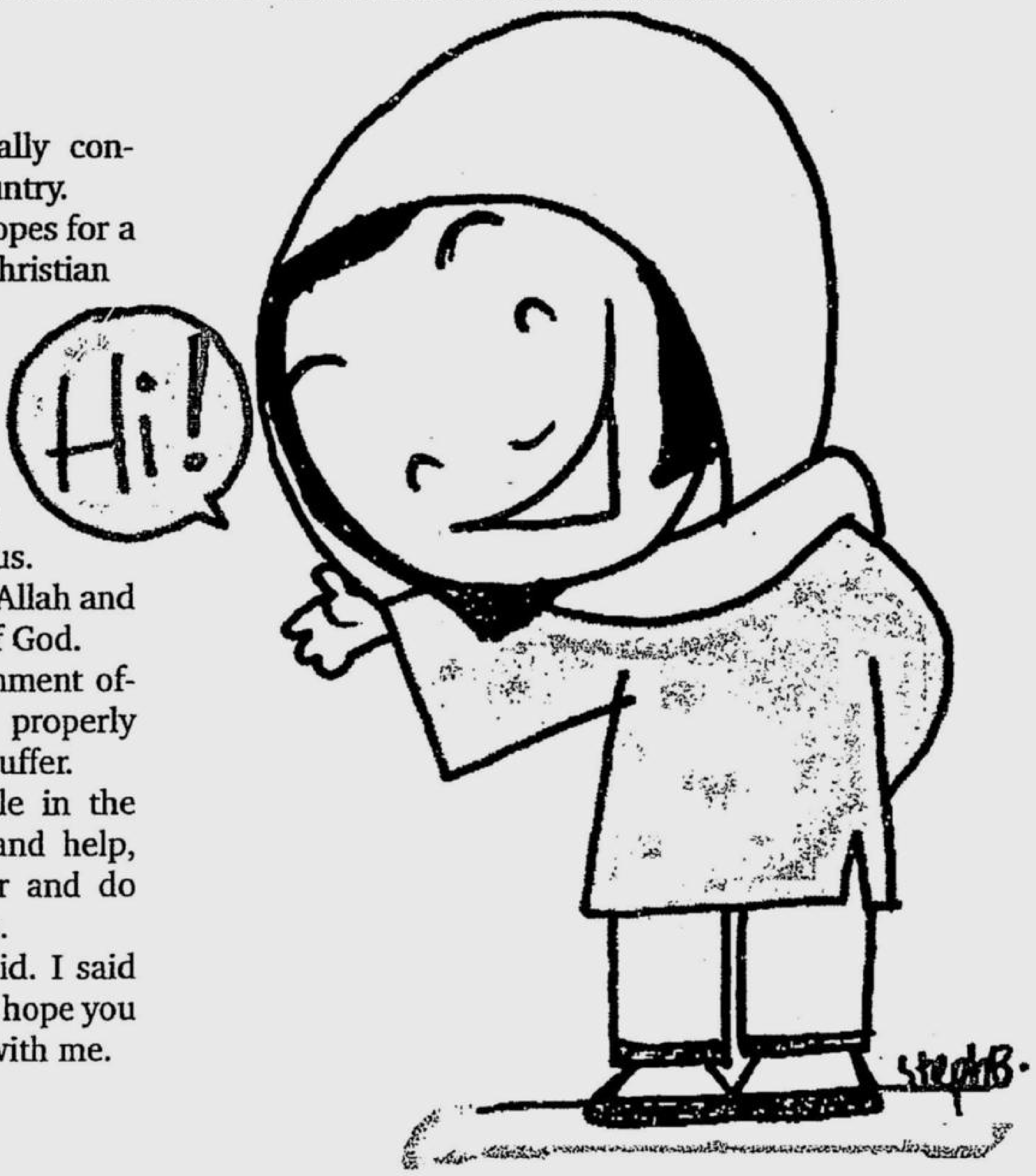
I also hope that the government officials would do their jobs properly without making the country suffer.

I also hope that all people in the Philippines will join hands and help, care, love, trust one another and do things for a better Philippines.

Much has already been said. I said and shared to you my hopes. I hope you could also share your hopes with me.

Your friend,
Fatima Lucman





Dear Fatima...

(from page 1)

members to gather together to rejoice and feast around the Nativity scenes that are present in nearly every home.

Hope... *Uma-asa*... I very much agree to what you wrote about the Abu Sayyaf of *sana* being able to change their ways...hmmm...not only them. All of us should try and mend our ways.

Hello there Fatima!
My name is Stanly.

To get along well with each other, I hope our leaders would just calm down and talk together peacefully, reasonably, conscientiously and knowledgeably.

After all, aren't we all Filipinos? Do we really need to fight with each other?

Yes, you're right! Aren't we all creations of God/Allah? We may have our differences like the fact that we call things in our religions differently.

You pray to Allah and we pray to God but both teachings are the same just as teaching humans to love one another. Its teachings are all the same only with a different approach and name.

I think that if everyone will just respect each other's rights then, we can attain peace in the Philippines, I really think that we can!

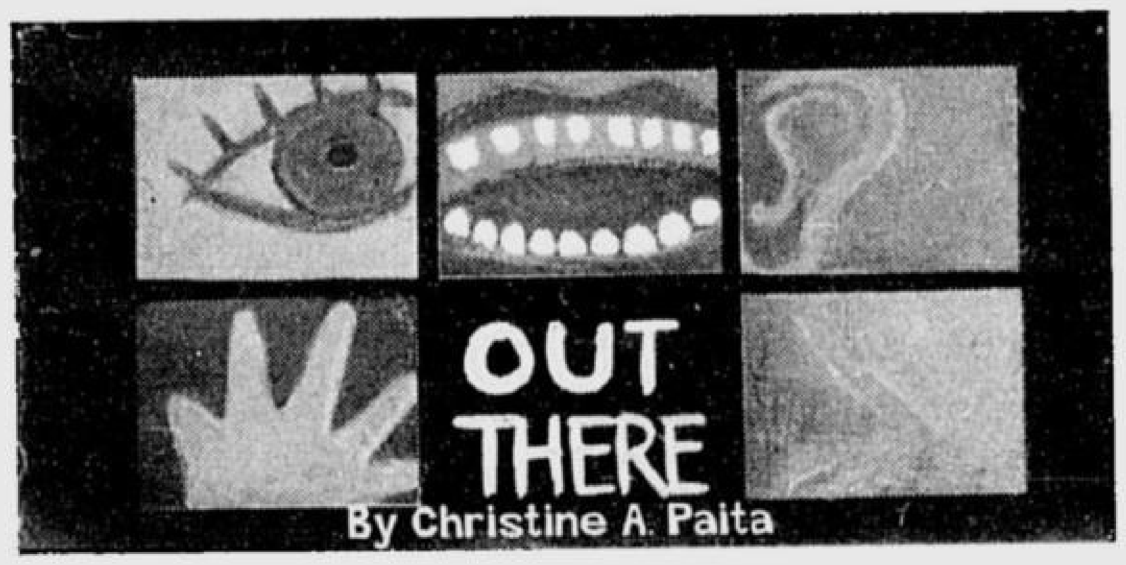
Lastly, I think that a better Philippines would be within us. Quoting Bishop Bacani: "Our forefathers, yours and mine, valued honor above all; they don't sell their honor for anything. That is no longer so now."

This is what we needed to do, unite together Filipino youths and teach/remind our elders the word "honesty" the the old-fashioned way and the value of "integrity."

Also hoping,
Stanly Sy

Editor's Note: ***Fatima*** *is 12 years old and lives in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte. She likes playing with the computer and watching TV. She also loves to dance.*

Stanly *is one of Junior Inquirer's school correspondents. He is Filipino-Chinese and is an active staffer of "Hoofprints," an award winning student newsletter of Xavier School in Greenhills.*



OUT THERE

By Christine A. Paita

Got something for Out There? Send us the info two weeks in advance. Our fax numbers are 897-4793 up to 94. Don't forget to include your contact numbers and addresses.

Workshops

OIL PAINTING. Join an **oil painting workshop** with children's book illustrator Arnel Mirasol. The workshop will be held at the Tata Design Specialist, 2143 C.M. Recto, Quiapo on weekends. Applicants are requested to show a sample of their work. Pencil drawings will do. For inquiries and preliminary interviews, call Arnel Mirasol at 231-0193.

CHILDREN'S THEATER. The Gantimpala Theater Foundation invites kids ages 5-12 to join its **theater workshop** every Saturday, from Jan. 11 to March 29, 2003. The Children's Theater workshop is from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Gantimpala office, 2nd Floor, Open-Air Auditorium, Rizal Park, Manila. Gift certificates which will entitle the recipient to a free Saturday session or to all 12 sessions at a discounted price are also available at the GTF office, the CCP Bookshop and select Country Waffles outlets. This might be the perfect gift of art to shy but talented young ones. For more info, please call GTF at 528-0603 or 0918-9212866, or send e-mail to gantimpala@pacific.net.ph.

Contest

CALLING ALL ARTISTS. The Philippine Board on Books for Young People is now accepting entries for the **2003 PBBY-Alcala Illustrators' Prize.** Entries must be based on the winning story "Sandosenang Kuya" by Russell Molina. Send entries to the PBBY Secretariat, c/o Adarna House, 73-A Scout Limbaga St., Barangay Laging Handa, Quezon City not later than Dec. 23, 2002. After the said date, entries must be sent to the PBBY Secretariat, c/o Adarna House, Room 201, JGS Bldg., 30 Scout Tuason St., Quezon City. All entries must be received by the PBBY Secretariat not later than 5 p.m., Friday, Jan. 31, 2003. For more info, please call PBBY at 372-3548, send fax to 372-4204 or e-mail to pbby@adarna.com.ph addressed to the PBBY Secretariat. Look for Dencel.

Stuff

HISTORY IN YOUR PC. Here's a new fun way of learning about Philippine history outside your history books. Check out **"Historycal Links," a new CD-rom game on Philippine history** that quizzes you on the "who," "what" and "where" of Philippine history. This new PC game will surely make learning about the country's past a blast! Students can soon try this educational CD-rom game when it tours the different schools this year. "Historycal Links" is now available at bookstores and museum gift shops. For inquiries and reservations, call Fundacion Santiago at 631-0715.

GOODWILL CARD. Visit Goodwill Bookstore and get a chance to own a **GBS Privilege Card.** Every single-receipt purchase of books or any denomination of the Goodwill Bookstore gift certificates amounting to P500 entitles the customer to a free GBS Privilege Card. The promo lasts until Jan. 20, 2003. You can also shop online at www.goodwillbookstore.com.

EMILIO is a young boy whose visit to the video arcade leads him to his country's true past in "Historycal Links."

Animal Planet

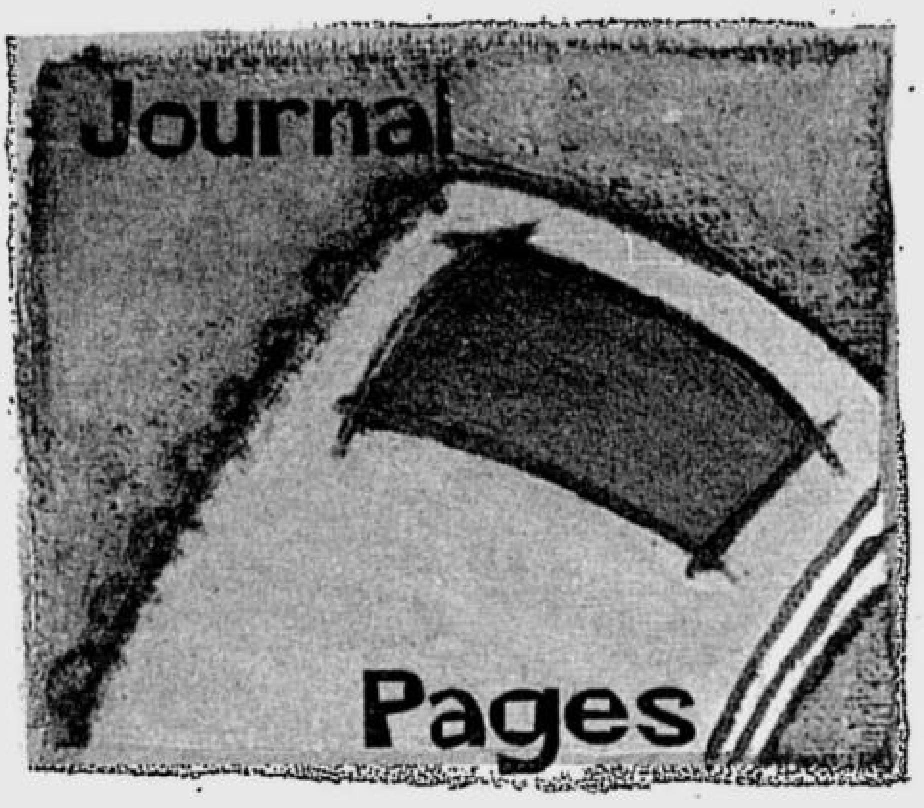
"VETS in the Wild" host Trude Mostue with a rhino.

Cable Picks

VETS IN THE WILD. Will a veterinarian's experience with domestic pets be enough to treat exotic animals? Find out in **"Vets in the Wild,"** airs every Sunday this January from 8 to 8:30 p.m. on Animal Planet. Armed with a vetmobile and a desire to help cure animals in wildlife, veterinarians Trude Mostue and Steve Leonard journey across Africa. On Jan. 5, the premiere episode takes the vets to Zimbabwe where they act as surrogate parents for young rhinos.

THE HERO FACTOR. Catch the first episode of **"Hero Factor"** on Monday, Jan. 20, 10-10:30 p.m. on the Discovery Channel. In this episode, 9-year-old Michaela Atkinson wakes up in the middle of the night to find that a fire has trapped her and her younger brother Jamie in their bedroom. Find out how Michaela overcomes her panic and saves her brother from danger.

MICHAELA'S courage saved her brother's life in "The Hero Factor."



My Grade Four Days

By Loren April Y. Mendoza
Miriam College Grade School
Quezon City

I'M now in Grade 5 at Miriam College and just finished Grade 4. Now that I am here I wonder, what more will come???

Life now is harder, busier and needs a lot of patience. Sometimes, I miss the times when I could spend more time chatting on the phone, playing outside and, of course, when I still could watch TV during nighttime. I can't indulge in those things anymore because I spend my free time studying and doing advance reading.

Last year, my Grade 4 days were the same as those in Grade 3. But of course lessons were harder. Well, maybe life is like that: the more you go up, the more you need to adjust.

Grade 4? Well, I really had fun when I was in Grade 4. Classmates, friends, teachers were really fun to be with. I often recall the past, those memorable events that happened to me. I think I need to treasure them most because they are an important part of my life.

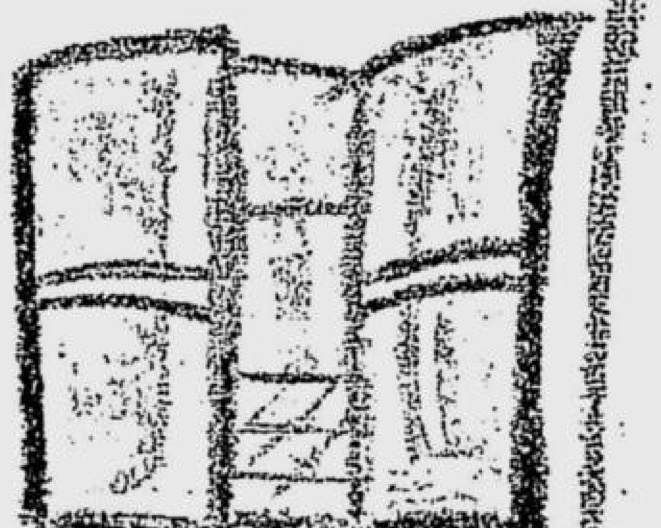
I am here now and this is just the beginning. I can't go back to where I used to be. I know that this will just take time. One by one, step by step I'll be where I should be. I just need to have more patience, trust in myself and soon I shall be on top to reach my goal.

Sound Familiar ?

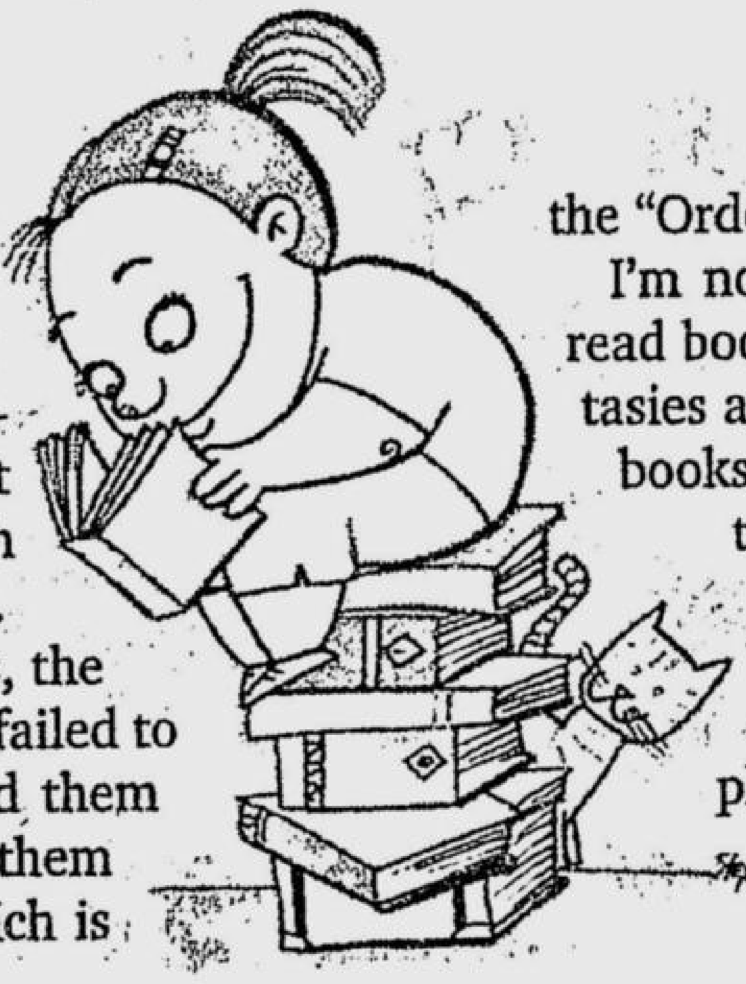
Write down your thoughts now and send them to JI. Who knows, you might just get published!

Straight from JI Readers

You can now reach us via e-mail! Our address is **ji@inquirer.com.ph** Don't forget to include your complete name, age, snail mail address and your phone number. Hope to hear from you soon!



Book Lover!



BOOKS are still better than movies, I say! I have already seen two "Harry Potter" films. From what I've seen, it's all better than my imagination, but reading the books are still much enjoyable and more fun for me.

Whenever I run out of books, the "Harry Potter" series has never failed to entertain me. Though I've read them over and over again, I still read them while anticipating Book 5, which is the "Order of the Phoenix."

I'm not a "Potter" fanatic. I just like to read books. I especially like mysteries, fantasies and magical books. People who like books of these kinds, you might want to try out "Daughters of the Moon" by Lynne Ewing. Good books challenge readers' imagination and allow them to travel to faraway places.—**ALVENE NGO**, Grace Christian High School, Valenzuela, Metro Manila

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Lynett A. Villariba
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Journal Pages

By Loren April Y. Mendoza
Miriam College Grade School
Quezon City

Help!
GRADE
5

I'M now in Grade 5 at Miriam College and just finished Grade 4. Now that I am here I wonder, what more will come???

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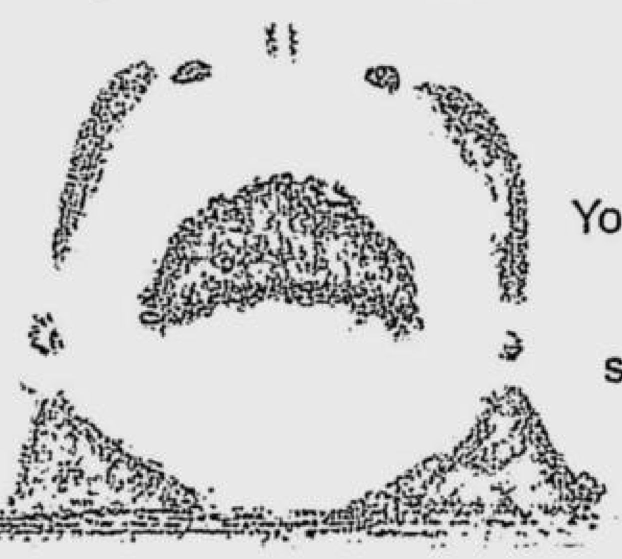
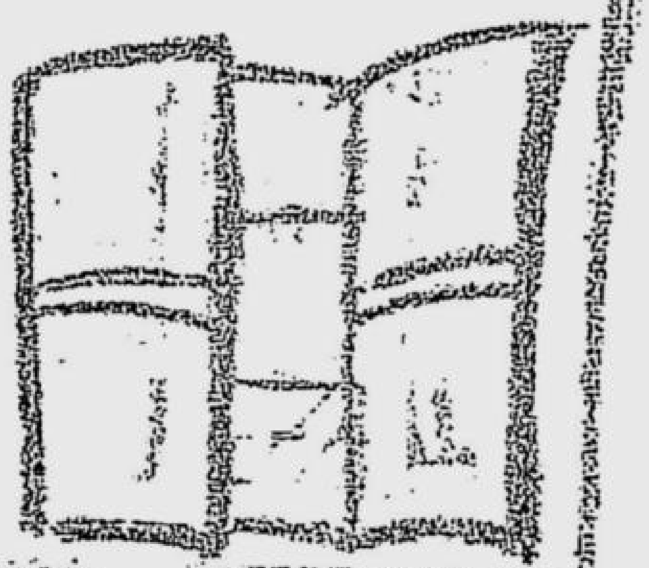
Write down your thoughts now and send them to JI. Who knows, you might just get published!

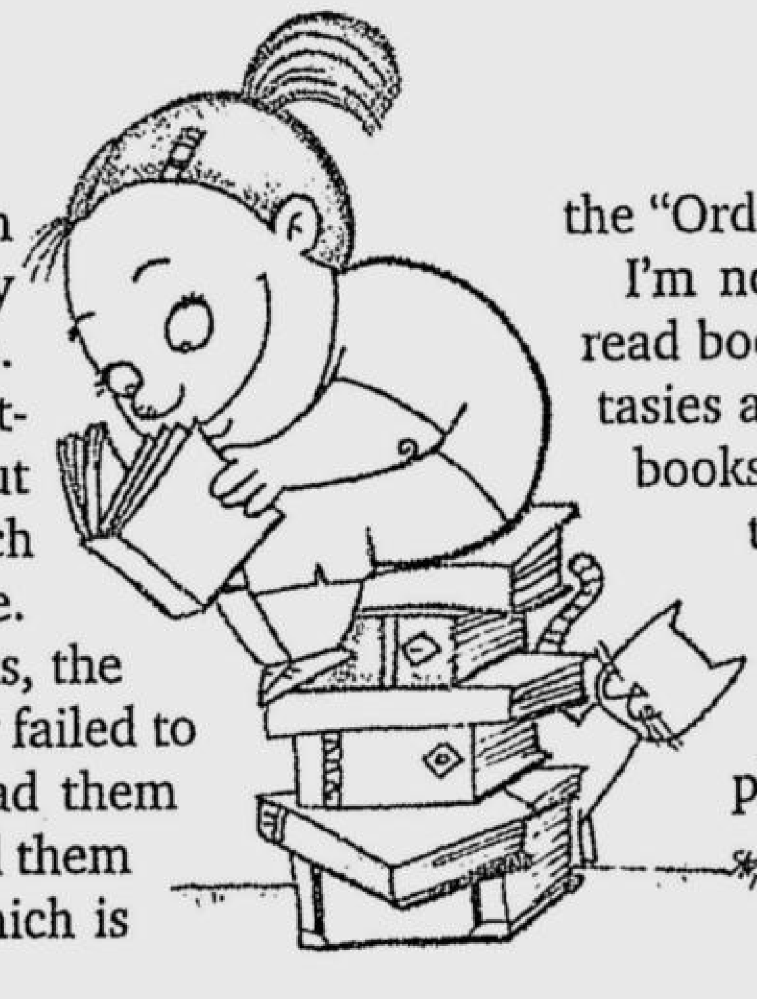
Straight from JI Readers



You can now reach us via e-mail! Our address is **ji@inquirer.com.ph** Don't forget to include your complete name, age, snail mail address and your phone number. Hope to hear from you soon!



Book Lover!



BOOKS are still better than movies, I say! I have already seen two "Harry Potter" films. From what I've seen, it's all better than my imagination, but reading the books are still much enjoyable and more fun for me.

Whenever I run out of books, the "Harry Potter" series has never failed to entertain me. Though I've read them over and over again, I still read them while anticipating Book 5, which is the "Order of the Phoenix."

I'm not a "Potter" fanatic. I just like to read books. I especially like mysteries, fantasies and magical books. People who like books of these kinds, you might want to try out "Daughters of the Moon" by Lynne Ewing. Good books challenge readers' imagination and allow them to travel to faraway places.—**ALVENE NGO**, Grace Christian High School, Valenzuela, Metro Manila

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New Year in Dap

Story by J.E: Royeca
Art by Felix Mago Miguel

DR. Jose Rizal dismissed the class that afternoon an hour earlier. He regularly conducted classes from after lunch until past four in the afternoon. He said he had to get worked up over something, and that made his pupils wonder.

Dr. Rizal had sixteen students, aged 13 to 14 years old. They were good-natured boys. Most belonged to the best families in the town of Dapitan while others were poor and from families whose parents could not even buy books for them.

Dr. Rizal did not charge them any money for his teaching services. He built near his house a boarding school where they could live while studying. He did not also charge them money for the board and lodging. As payment, he made them in charge of feeding his pets and chickens, watering his trees and plants, and cleaning his clinic and hospital houses.

The boys had gained much in their studies. They were already fast readers, they knew arithmetic and elementary geometry, and could now speak some Spanish and English. They could also locate countries in the map sent from Austria by Rizal's friend, Ferdinand Blumentritt.

Rizal also taught them plant breeding, carpentry, masonry, and collecting insects, birds, and animals for nature research. During playtime, they had gymnastics, weightlifting, swimming, *arnis* and hunting with the use of rifle. Most importantly, he inculcated into their minds how to behave like gentlemen and how to earn for their living when they grew older.

Classes were regularly conducted in the boarding school, under a tree, or in the cool kiosk that the pupils built on top of a hill. Sometimes, town teachers tested their abilities by officiating oral examinations. Many of the pupils won prizes for performing brilliantly. The parents felt elated when they saw their children's progress in their studies. They were glad that because Rizal lived in their town, their children were not wasting their youthful days.

ON JULY 17, 1892, two weeks after Rizal arrived in Manila from Hong Kong, the Spanish government officials announced that they were banishing him to Dapitan.

They were against Rizal's publication of the novels "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo" which aimed to spread the idea of Philippine independence from Spanish rule.

They said Rizal had to be punished and isolated so that he would not be a threat to their rule of the Philippines.

That day, Rizal arrived in Dapitan under heavy security. Dapitan was a small and quiet town in the province of Zamboanga Del Norte on the island of Mindanao. It had about 6,000 residents.

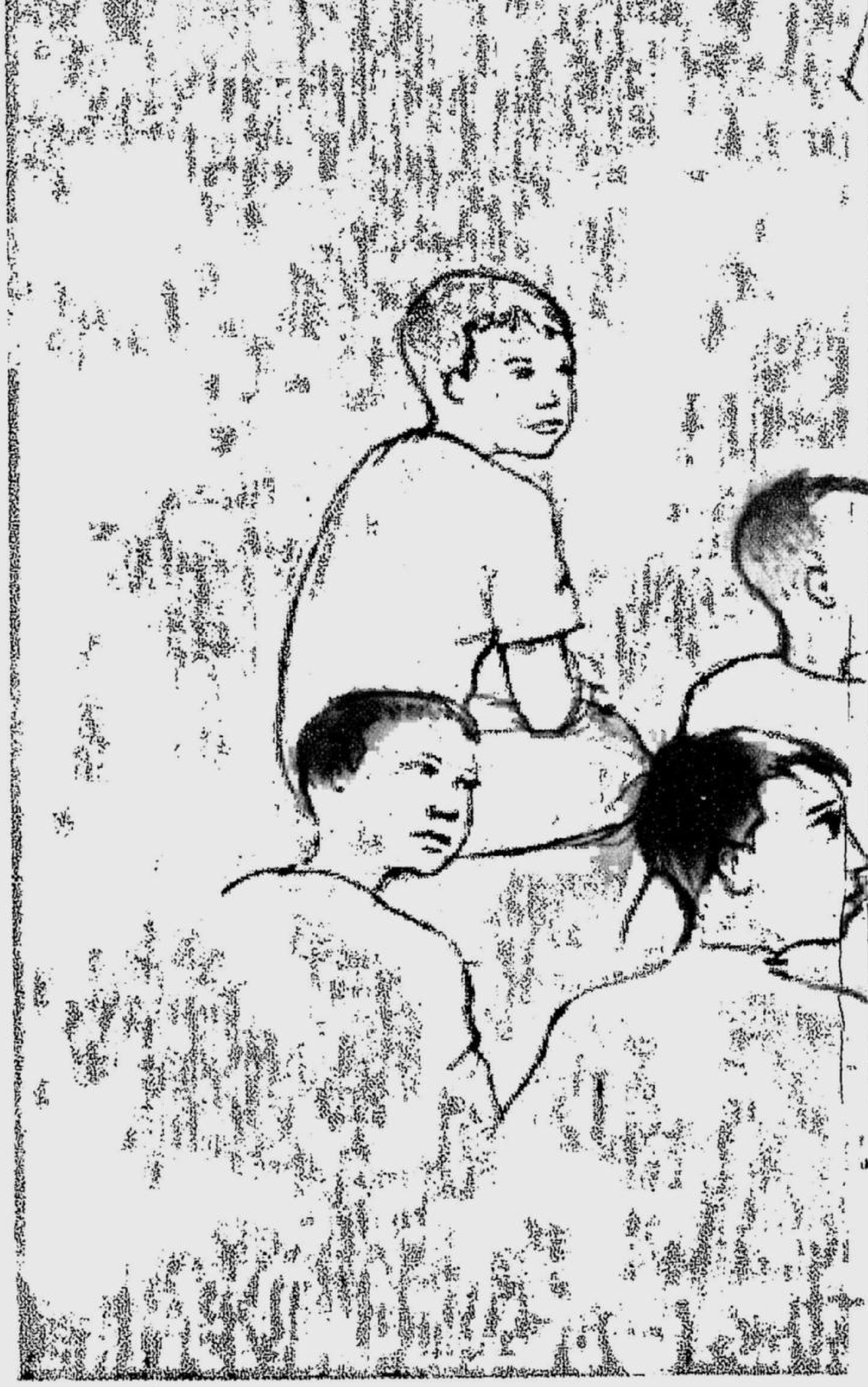
One kilometer from the town proper was a 38-hectare land that Rizal bought from local farmers for 75 pesos. Facing the bay, that land was called Talisay. Rizal built there his house, the boarding school, clinic, and hospital houses where his patients were lodged in while under his medical care. Rizal's estate enlarged as he bought more hectares of land there.

As an ophthalmologist or a doctor who specialized in eye treatments, he became famous as many of his patients came from various parts of the Philippines and even from abroad.

A rich Filipino merchant paid him a generous amount for saving him from total blindness. One English patient who had come all the way from Hong Kong went to him for an eye operation and because he cured him, he was paid P500. One Spaniard whose eyes he also cured paid him P200. A rich woman

New Year/ p. 11

> *"Dr. Rizal sold rice, fishhooks, the material used for making pantaloons at one peseta per yard, and even stockings."*



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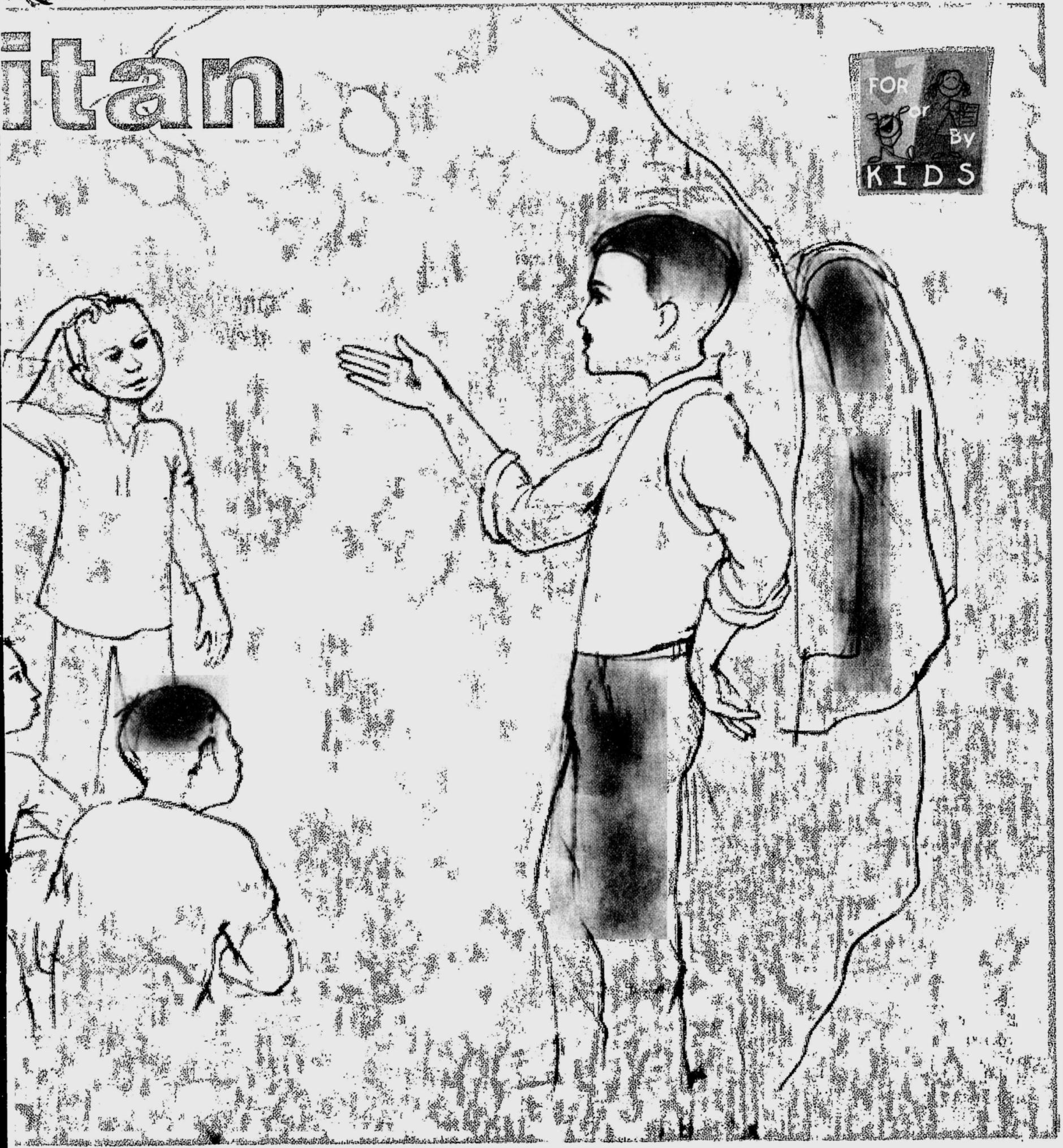


Kids'r'rrific

JJ's Truths

This 12-year-old can give any public official a run for the money

YOUNG Atenean Salvador Jose III—JJ to friends—just loves public speaking. But he's much smarter than some grown-ups who have been public speakers even before he was born.

For JJ, elocution or public speaking must involve telling the truth.

"I don't want to be a politician because it's very hard," he says, then delivers wallop of truth: "they always talk about what to do but they don't do it."

Instead, JJ wants to be a neurosurgeon when he grows up.

Role Models

JJ has won a number of public speaking contests in school. He says he was first asked to do a speech in front of the class when he was just a prep student. "They let you choose your own topic in Prep," he says.

JJ, emphasizing a point, raises a fist in the air. ROGER CARPIO

But the 12-year-old Atenean says that if given the chance to choose a topic for a speech now, he would talk about his parents.

"They're my heroes," he says. "They are just so supportive." ***With a report by Maria Zobel Certeza***

PUBLIC speaking is JJ's favorite thing. Here he poses for the camera in front of the Ateneo de Manila gym. ROGER CARPIO

R U 'RRIFIC?

'Rrific kids are smart
'Rrific kids are fun
Some aren't in the honors list
But get their homework done

Somehow the world's
a better place
I know this much is true
Hey 'Rrific kid!
We know you're there
We love you 'cause you're you!

If you think you're 'Rrific' or know someone who is, fill out the the nomination form below and send it to:

Junior Inquirer
'KIDS'R'RRIFIC Page
Phil. Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces
cor. Yague & Mascardo Sts.
1231 Makati City

Chosen nominees will be featured on this page and will get a

FREE Junior Inquirer & CASIO EMI T-shirt, Plus! a chance to win a Keylighting keyboard!

Kids'r'rrific nomination form

I nominate: ______________________

____

____

Age: ______________________

I think she's/he's 'Rrific because: (Here's a tip! Write a detailed description of a good deed, project or accomplishment by your nominee.)

____

____

____

____

____

____

She/he lives at ______________________

____

____

and studies at ______________________

____

Her/his contact number is:

____

Sender's Name: ______________________

____

Sender's Age & School: ______________________

____

Sender's Address: ______________________

____

Sender's Contact No.: ______________________

____

____

KEY LIGHTING KEYBOARD
Only from CASIO

Barbie's Journey

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A FEW people would know that Yvette Barbra Almalbis' childhood dream was to become a lawyer.

"I've always been a music aficionado, but I never thought that I would be doing this for a living," laughs Barbie, referring to her present-day stint as the vocalist of one of the most popular bands in the Philippines, Barbie's Cradle.

But the 25-year-old musician says that she has always had qualms about growing up and working in a stuffy, boring office.

"Maybe that's why I ended up doing what I really love, which is singing and writing music," she smiles.

Family Band

Barbie started immersing herself in music when she was 14 years old. She would collaborate with friends in writing songs and lyrics.

"I would then 'jam' and play songs with my high school band, with my mom as bassist, my friend as drummer, and his father as guitarist," she shares animatedly. "It was kind of a family thing."

Barbie says that the best songs usually come to life naturally. She would not force herself to write them, because they might turn out artificial and insincere.

She adds that she writes the music and lyrics together, not one ahead of the other, as most songwriters usually do.

Walking With God

When asked about what inspires her to write her songs, Barbie answers without blinking, "The new things I learn."

She then shares enthusiastically how the past two years have been completely "life-changing" for her.

"I reached a point when I thought I had everything: my band was great, and so was my family, school and relationships," says Barbie. "But there was still this big, gaping void."

The process of finding God was not easy for Barbie, but now she can proudly say she has since been at peace with herself and everything around her.

"The kind of music that I write has also matured," she relates. "I want to share my experience with the world and tell them to celebrate God and get to know Him."

Kid At Heart

On ordinary days, Barbie loves to do kid stuff with family and friends. She recently did art attack with her brother and they proudly created a "crocodile."

She also loves playing softball and basketball, saying that she makes it a point to do fun things despite her busy schedule.

The talented musician has words of wisdom to kids who dream of becoming musicians and rock stars someday.

"Be creative. Don't go with whatever that's out there," she shares. "Make your own music and at the same time always keep an open mind."

Barbie stresses that music is a powerful tool that influences the way you think and the way you live.

"Choose your music wisely, be aware that it will affect you and your future fans and admirers," she says with a last grin.

BARBIE shares the fun and serious things in life through music.

RANDY HORMILLOSA

Do you know a grown-up who

- is fun to be with
- has an exciting job
- keeps an amazing hobby
- is all of the above???

If you know a grown-up whom all kids will love, give him or her the stamp:

A.K.A. COOL

Just fill out the nomination form below and tell us why your fave grown-up is the absolute coolest. If your nominee is chosen, ***YOU'LL*** *get a free JI T-shirt! Now that's really cool.*

A.K.A. COOL
is an adult known as cool
They're the folks
In our own family
Or the people
we meet in school

I nominate ______________.

He/She is ________ years old and

is my ________________.

Here are five super solid reasons why I think you should write about him/her:

1)____________________;

2)____________________;

3)____________________;

4)____________________;

5)____________________;

My nominee lives a____________________.

Give him/her a call at ________

or send him/her an e-mail at ____________________.

By the way, I'm ____________________.

I'm__________ years old.

My address is____________________.

You may call me at____________________

¿Thinkathon?
BY BONG BARRAMEDA

Word Wise

IN this week's quiz, a word from the wise is sufficient, literally. Listed below are 15 proverbs, each with a missing word. Can you complete them?

1. A friend in need is a friend _____.
2. There's more than one way to ____ a cat.
3. Two _____ don't make a right.
4. Don't judge a book by its ____.
5. _______ is the better part of valor.
6. People who live in _____ houses shouldn't throw stones.
7. You can't teach an old ___ new tricks.
8. The child is ______ to the man.
9. A penny saved is a penny ______.
10. A _______ stone gathers no moss.
11. Too many cooks spoil the _____.
12. The proof of the _______ is in the eating.
13. An _____ mind is the devil's workshop.
14. Finders keepers, losers _______.
15. A little _______ is a dangerous thing.

Answers:

1. indeed
2. skin
3. wrongs
4. cover
5. Discretion
6. glass
7. dog
8. father
9. earned
10. rolling
11. broth
12. pudding
13. idle
14. weepers
15. learning

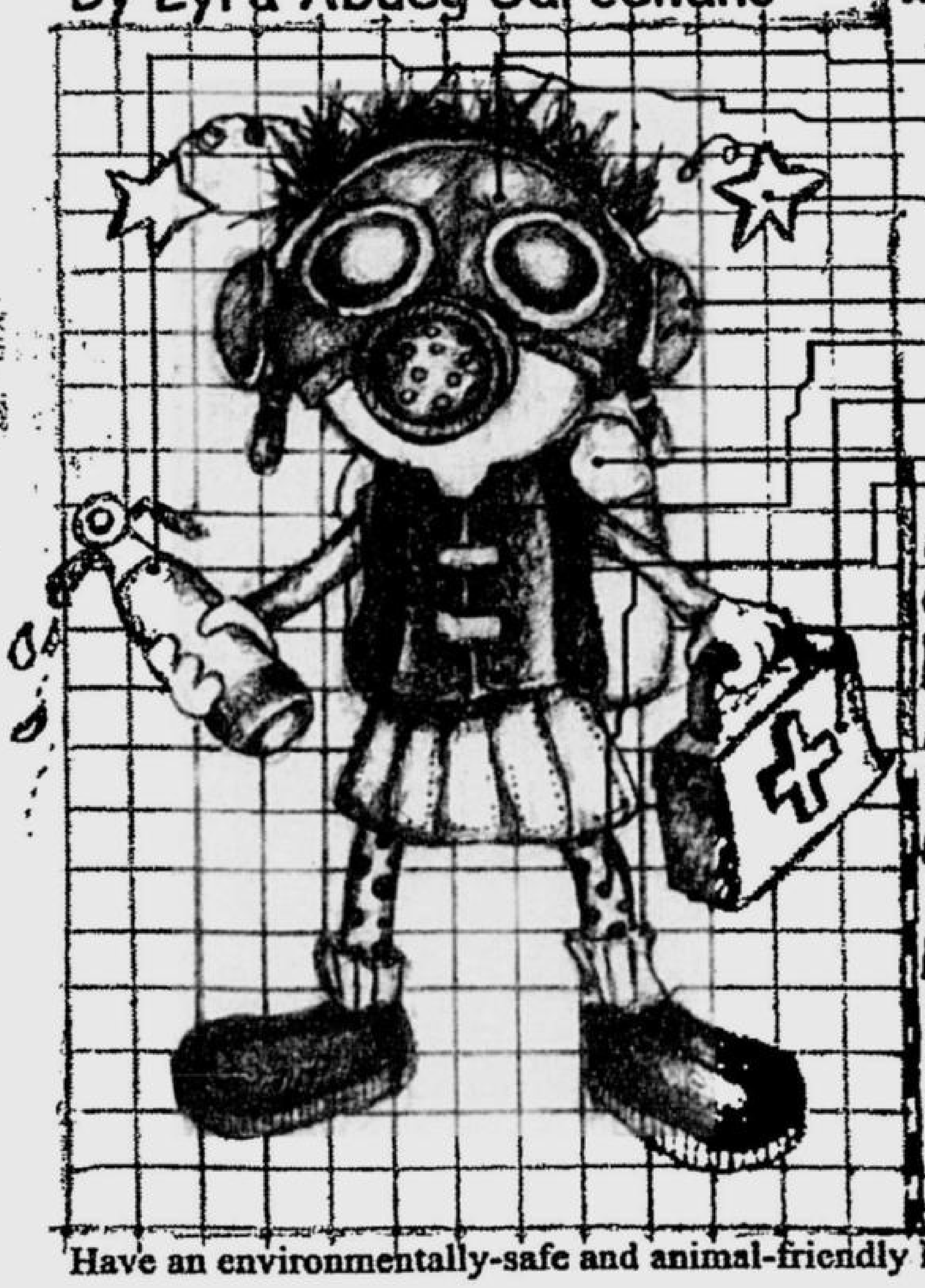
Ratings:

superbrain!
excellent!
good!

11-12	9-10	6-8

Atomo & Weboy D'Buddha Bear

By Lyra Abueg Garcellano



ATOMO's NEW YEAR's EVE DUDS

- Gas Mask for New Year smog
- Water squirter to extinguish flames
- Right star to match left star
- Ear muffs to save eardrums
- Firecracker-proof vest
- First aid kit
- Backpack for munchies
- Lucky polka dot leggings

Toxins Galore!

Search for these chemicals that are found in firecrackers and their smoke.

CHLORINE
DIOXINS
STRONTIUM
VANADIUM
TITANIUM
BARIUM
LEAD
MAGNESIUM
ALUMINUM
ZINC
OZONE
SULFUR
AMMONIUM
ARSENIC
PHOSPHOROUS
SODIUM
ZIRCONIUM

DIOXINSDEFWXAAPSB
CAAMMONIUMYZLCHT
HOBCHGIJSODIUMORC
LLPOTASSIUMVMASQ
OEGPHITJKULLIBPN
RARSENICIJKFNHHT
IDLMNRTRITZUUGOIF
NOPQOVANADIUMRRU
ERUVZBNEGMNPJIOM
ZIRCONIUMNCQKLUM
STWYNCUFHORSNOS
XZABEDMAGNESIUMPQ

Atomo's and Weboy's New Year's resolution is to say NO to SMOG!

Greet the New Year without being mean to the environment and your health. Lay off the firecrackers.

Sock it to me, 2003!
Peet...

Have an environmentally-safe and animal-friendly New Year!

New Year in Dapitan

(from page 7)

from Dipolog also arrived at his clinic for surgical operation but having disguised herself as poor, he charged her only P5. From those fees he was able to send as gifts modest amounts of money to his parents and sisters in Manila.

He operated on three to five patients a week. Though many of them were poor, some managed to pay. The money paid was not enough for the services he rendered yet he still attended to their needs. He even gave free medicines to those poor patients.

Sometime in June 1894, he operated on his mother's eyes while she was living with him there. The operation on her cataracts was successful but her eyes later suffered inflamation because she did not follow his advice to take rest and not remove the bandage. She was completely healed though.

RIZAL also planted trees in Talisay. He had more than one hundred *lanzones*, mango, *macupa*, jackfruit, *santol*, *balanos*, and mangosteen trees. He also planted coffee and cacao. He also had coconut trees from which they got tender coconut meat and made oil.

He bought abaca fibers from local farmers and exported them to Manila. He profited many times from this trade. Dr. Rizal sold rice, fishhooks, the material used for making pantaloons at one peseta per yard, and even stockings. He sold stockings because the town's parish priest required local men and women to wear them during Sunday masses.

From January to March 1895, together with a servant and his pupils, Rizal built a dike so that they would have a water depository in time for the dry season. Built on top of a valley, they used stone, brick and mortar for it as well as live rock, sand, lime and cement. Its long aqueduct skirted along hills and rocks while the water passing through it came from the river, brooks, and springs of Dapitan. His pupils erected the kiosk beside the dike. They also built a platform on one side of the dike for their diving and swimming lessons.

It was now December 30, 1895. They had a sumptuous Christmas feast in his yard the week before. Rizal and his wife were glad that most of those invited came to attend the party.

But these past few days, the schoolboys had noticed that Rizal was quiet, lonely and was no longer teaching them eagerly and that long, unlike before.

"Perhaps he misses his mother, sisters and nephews," Amat, the brightest of the pupils, said.

"I knew it," said another student. "When they left here, he was very sad. He felt he was already very lonely."

Rizal's mother, Doña Teodora, sister Señora Trining, and nephew Emilio arrived there in Dapitan in August 1893 to live with him and ease his loneliness. Then in November 1894, one of his older sisters, Señora Maria, also arrived there with her two young sons.

But in January 1895, his mother and Señora Trining had to go back to Manila because his father was sick. Then the following May, Señora Maria, her two sons, and Emilio also had to go back to Manila. Rizal was left alone again.

"It's good that Señora Josefina has come here," said Anis.

"Yeah," Tom agreed. "A very beautiful lady came to him to become his wife!"

"What if we give Señor Rizal and Señora Josefina a New Year's party?" Amat suggested.

"It will be tomorrow midnight."

"What have you in mind?" Jose asked.

"Let's hunt wild boars. Tatay knows how to make *lechon*," Amat said.

They agreed. They borrowed Rizal's small pistol. In the forests of Talisay, they were able to catch three big wild boars. They also harvested *lanzones*, jackfruit, mangoes, and other fruits.

Amat's father cooked the three big wild boars as *lechon*. The boys' mothers also cooked *biko*, *ginatan*, *suman* with *latik*, *bibingka*, and other native delicacies. The other fathers of the boys also caught lobster, fat crabs, shrimps, and other seafood for the party. They brought all those food to Rizal's house the following day, December 31.

DR. RIZAL was surprised and overjoyed when his schoolboys told him that they were giving him and his wife a party for the New Year. All he could do was to invite their parents, his servants, and almost anyone to the party.

They made *sulos* for the night. While the hours ticked on toward midnight, they were eating, laughing, dancing and singing. They were wearing their best clothes. They were playing guitars, flute, drums, and tambourines. Midnight came. It was New Year's Day, January 1, 1896! Grown-up men lit fireworks to welcome it.

The schoolboys were glad to see that Rizal was enjoying the party with his wife and all of them. They saw him eating lobsters, shrimps, and white rice. He was laughing while he danced with his wife.

It was one of the most memorable days of Rizal in Dapitan. It was also his last New Year's Day there because on July 31, 1896, he finally left the town already since the Spanish government at last ended his exile, after four years.

The people of Dapitan cried when they saw him, his wife, and some of his relatives and friends boarding a boat. They would always remember that a very humble man once lived there and was glad to teach their children, engage them in businesses, and cure their ailments.

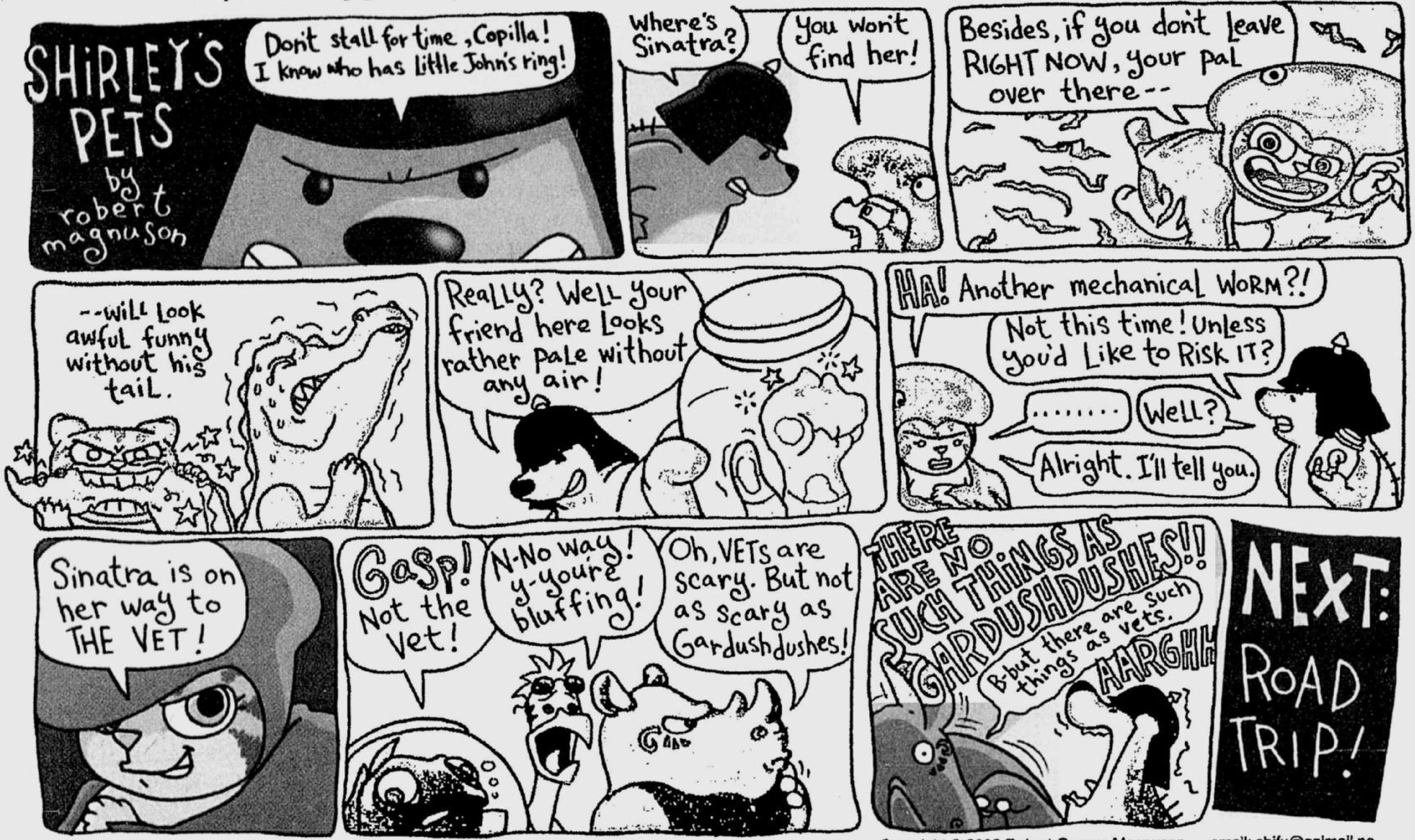
***J.E.** loves to write historical fiction for kids.*

***Felix** is an illustrator and a book designer. He's a father to twins—Ulan at Ulap Ang Angin.*

WEIRD BUT TRUE.

Carolyn Patryn of New Jersey practices laying on a bed of nails during class at Sideshow School in New York. The school, taught in Brooklyn's Coney Island, provides a rare chance for aspiring fire-eaters, sword-swallowers and human blockheads to learn the disappearing tricks of the venerable trade. AP

Last Episode: Mechanique is busy freeing our heroes from Pancho's trap. Meanwhile, Pancho and his team of animals storm Shirley's place. They are soon engaged in a fight with Copilla and Smithee. That is, until Copilla's wings are clipped by Fitzgerald Gator...


SHIRLEY'S PETS
by robert magnuson
Don't stall for time, Copilla! I know who has little John's ring!
Where's Sinatra?
You won't find her!
Besides, if you don't leave RIGHT NOW, your pal over there--
--will look awful funny without his tail.
Really? Well your friend here looks rather pale without any air!
HA! Another mechanical WORM?!
Not this time! Unless you'd like to risk IT?
....
Well?
Alright. I'll tell you.
Sinatra is on her way to THE VET!
Gasp! Not the Vet!
N-No way! y-you're bluffing!
Oh, VETs are scary. But not as scary as Gardushdushes!
THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS GARDUSHDUSHES!!
B-but there are such things as vets.
AARGHH
NEXT: ROAD TRIP!

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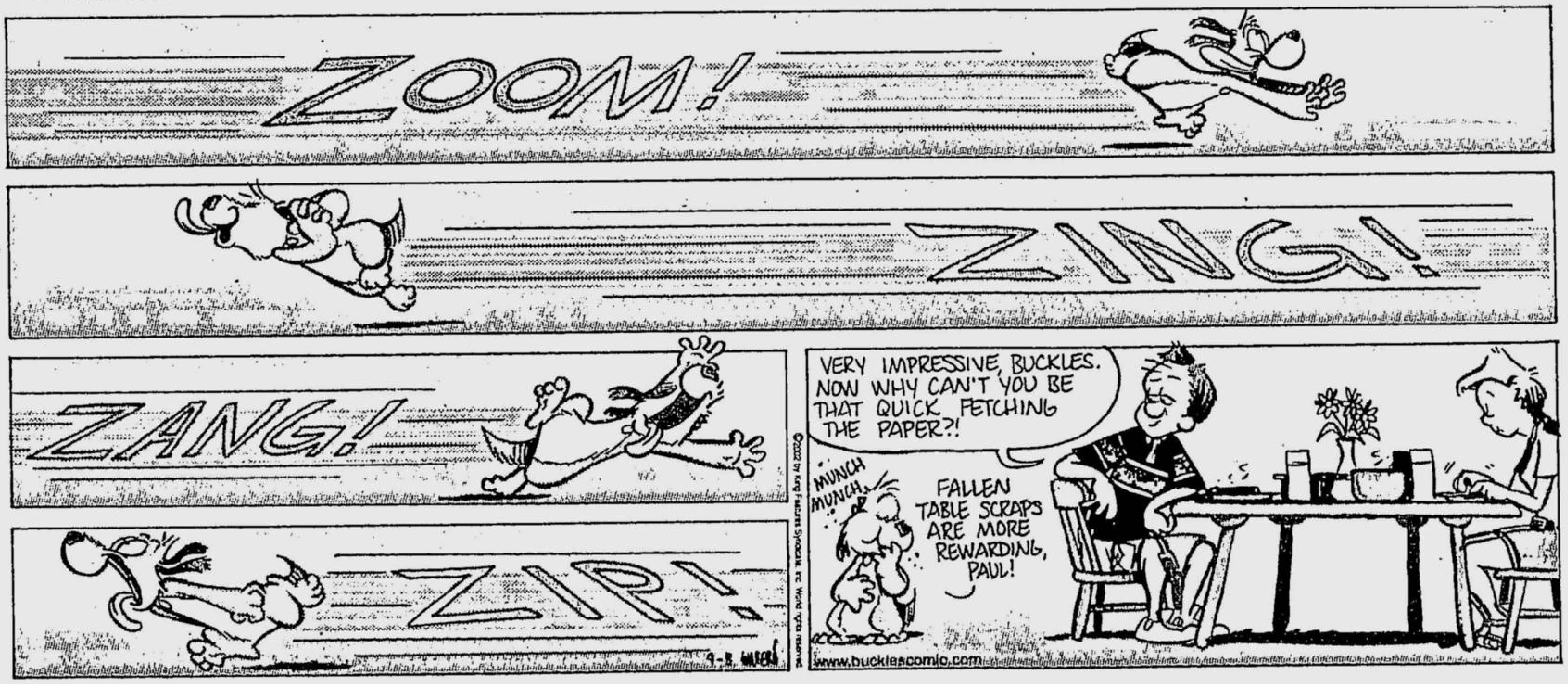
BUCKLES

BY DAVID GILBERT


ZOOM!
ZING!
ZANG!
ZIP!
9-3 GILBERT
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